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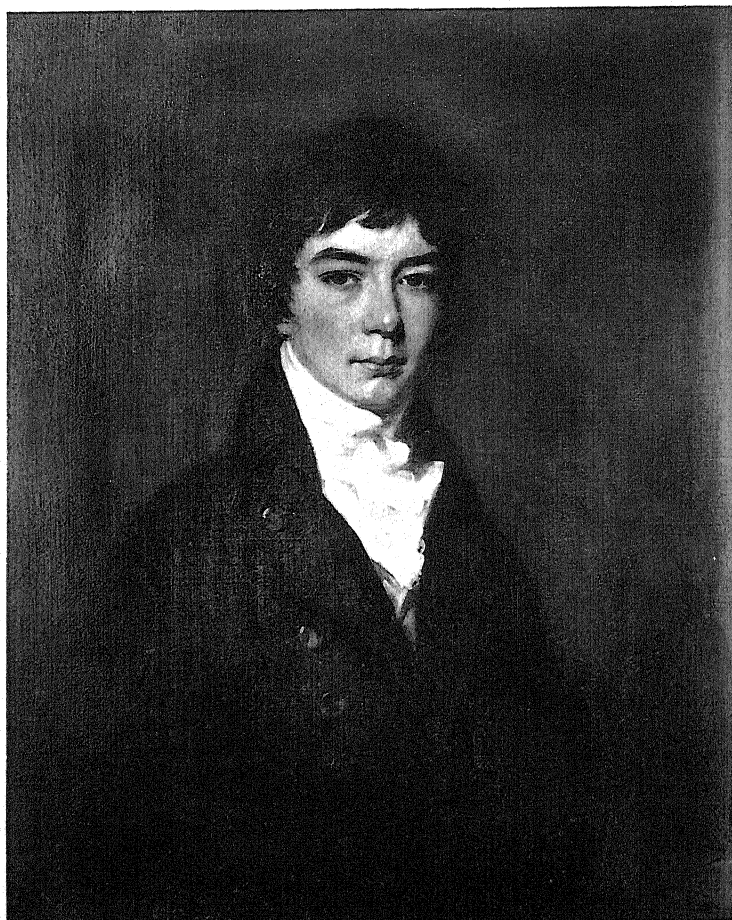




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THE LIFE OF  
CHARLES, LORD METCALFE

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CHARLES THEOPHILUS METCALFE

At the Age of Fourteen

*From the portrait by J. Hoppner, R.A., in the possession of  
Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, present baronet*





THE LIFE OF  
CHARLES, LORD METCALFE

*by*

EDWARD THOMPSON

*Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford  
former Leverhulme Research Fellow*

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To  
H. N. and N. M. E. SPALDING

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## PREFACE

For another story as versatile and variously important as Charles Metcalfe's we must go back to the Elizabethan age, to Sir Walter Raleigh. And Raleigh never had the power and authority which lay in Metcalfe's hands from boyhood. At sixteen, Metcalfe was Lord Wellesley's favourite personal secretary; and thenceforward for over thirty years he was in every crisis and close to all decisions.

'Lord Ellenborough said' (March 5, 1834) 'he was aware of the little interest felt in that House upon any subject connected with the affairs of India, and he knew therefore that it would be irksome both to him and to them to address them at any length on such a subject.'<sup>1</sup> Every minute aware of this gloomy fact, in writing Metcalfe's story I have tried to compress and omit, and above all to suppress opinions merely eccentric and individual to myself, and to let the story make its own impression. But the story has necessitated writing India's history during a whole generation crowded with exciting far-reaching events—and writing it with an intimacy of detail that must be crushed out from the formal 'Histories of India'. How could I, with the fullness of material that I had collected, write such a story with a brevity that would make it easy work for myself and an evening's light reading for our public?

And after India came Jamaica, in the very year when emancipation had been put through; and Canada on the morrow of a rebellion, when it seemed 'fifty-fifty' that she would find the freedom she demanded inside the Empire and that she would break away because she could not. This story is of first importance not merely to the handful who try to get behind prejudice and

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, 23, p. 476.

## PREFACE

controversy, to the real course of Indian history, but to all, on either side of the Atlantic, who are interested in Imperial and Colonial problems. Lastly, with this story is bound up a personal story of a man exceptional in himself, in courage and independence and loneliness and intensity of suffering. In Metcalfe's own words, 'I have no pretensions to infallibility of judgment, and no security against errors.' I send this book out with apology, certainly; but also with the claim that for once length has been inevitable and justified.

Very few books can have incurred more obligations. To take them chronologically, the Leverhulme Trustees enabled me to begin the study of the period between Tipu Sultan's death and the Peshwa's elimination (1799-1819). I was left wishing to supplement the book I had written (and have not published) by a special study of one of the period's major figures. Sir Theophilus Metcalfe settled my hesitation between Metcalfe, Munro, Elphinstone and Malcolm, by consenting to put Lord Metcalfe's papers into my hands. Mr. and Mrs. H. N. Spalding offered Oriel College, Oxford, a three years' fellowship for furtherance of British-Indian historical research, and the Provost and Fellows did me the honour of electing me into their number. The Rhodes Trust added a grant towards the expense of visiting India, to examine historical sites and manuscript sources in that country.

Charles Metcalfe at Eton determined to become famous, and from the first he carefully kept all papers relating to his actions. After his natural son's death, however, these were destroyed by a lady who wished to extirpate all evidence of Colonel James Metcalfe's irregular origin. Over a hundred letters written by Charles Metcalfe during the last twenty-seven years of his life, to his favourite sister, Mrs. Georgiana Smyth, escaped destruction and, with Sir Theophilus Metcalfe's concurrence, were handed over to me by Miss Mary Clive Bayley, granddaughter of Charles Metcalfe's younger brother, the fourth baronet. To her, and her sisters Lady Chapman and Mrs. Hardcastle, I am indebted for unfailing kindness and assistance, which included family tradi-

## PREFACE

tion and information and the loan of portraits for reproduction. Mr. Philip Morrell, who has charge of Lord William Bentinck's papers, discovered and put at my disposal another 150 very important letters, written by Metcalfe when he was Lord William's second-in-command. I ransacked the India Office's abundant resources, which are available to all serious students; Dr. H. N. Randle, the Librarian, kept watch for Metcalfe letters and from time to time drew my attention to some that might have escaped me. Miss Ursula Low let me see two unpublished letters by Metcalfe to Sir John Low. Dr. J. F. Bruce of Lahore showed me a rough version made for him of Sohan Lal's Persian chronicles of the court of Ranjit Singh, which contained many glimpses of Metcalfe, Ochterlony, and other British officers as they appeared to Indian eyes. While I was midway in my task the Bombay Government decided to throw open their own records up to 1805, and I went to India. The Indian officers in their archives department took an interest in my work that I could never have hoped for, and continually brought me old periodicals or letters in which the name Metcalfe occurred. Bombay began a progressive revelation of the wealth of hardly touched historical sources that exist in India. From Bombay I went on to Poona and Satara. At Poona are the Peshwa's *daftar* (Persian and Marathi records) and the Alienation Office collections. The latter include masses of Elphinstone's letters, often in single sheets widely separated from the sheets that precede or follow them. There are also many *roomals* (handkerchiefs) of untranslated Persian MSS. A hundred and thirty years ago, every Resident at a Native Court had his network of spies and 'news-writers'. Native Courts spied on the Residents in return. Poona *roomals* contain daily reports made for someone who was probably the last Peshwa, sent by agents at the courts of Ranjit Singh, the Maharajas of Gwalior, Indore and Jodhpur, the King of Delhi, and Muntazim-ud-Daula ('Administrator of the State'—Charles Metcalfe, Delhi's actual ruler). Only the Ranjit Singh reports have been examined, and in part translated and published.

## PREFACE

No detail is too homely for inclusion, and certainly not the details of the great man's physical habits and condition. The narratives are terse and pedestrian, but the writers often tell more than they think they are telling.

After Bombay, Poona, Satara, I was shown the carefully kept Persian records of Hyderabad. I found no Metcalfe material here, but I collected (as elsewhere) some floating tradition. Tradition is particularly valuable in India, where so much of a man's achievement consists in the impression left on a populace that watches with a closeness hardly paralleled in any other land. At Delhi and Calcutta I gathered more material. Finally, at Pondichéry the French authorities gave me the run of what is far and away the best kept records office in India, the Bibliothèque Nationale. In the end, in one way and another I amassed such a load of material that I hoped I should find no more, and found myself thinking with much kindness of the person who had made my task just endurable by destroying the boxes of records left by Lord Metcalfe himself.

That destruction, however, created a problem which Kaye, Metcalfe's official biographer, solved in his own manner. Kaye was *ex-officio* biographer-in-chief of the pre-Mutiny Indian statesmen, and had at his disposal masses of letters, etc., which he handled arbitrarily, often indifferent to his readers' justifiable curiosity. He must have known all about Metcalfe's three sons, and who their mother was. Yet, except for one careless phrase (meaningless, unless you know the sons existed) in his *Selections* from Metcalfe's official papers, Kaye shut his eyes (and his readers' eyes) to an episode considered unfit for publication in the Victorian Age. His *Life of Metcalfe* is his worst book, partly because he disliked Metcalfe, but also because he deliberately suppressed facts. Metcalfe acknowledged his sons, and had them educated in England. James, who survived him, became distinguished in his own right, a colonel and C.B., A.D.C. to Lord Dalhousie and Lord Clyde, making numerous appearances in their letters and in books about them. He is in the *D.N.B.*, in

## PREFACE

Buckland's *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, in the Addiscombe Directory, in obituary notices of his father. What is the use of pretending that he never lived? There is none, in 1937. Lord Metcalfe's sister, who had the charge of his sons' education, went through her brother's letters and ripped out the references to these sons. But the work was done imperfectly, and some passages were overlooked. These passages I have quoted when it seemed right to quote them, and I have tried to set the whole episode in its place, in which action Lord Metcalfe's family have supported me.

In conclusion, in addition to those whose names I have already mentioned, I must thank for advice or facilities Mr. H. G. Rawlinson, C.I.E.; Rai Sahib Dr. Sardesai, who has charge of the Poona records; Mr. Dinkar Ganesh Bhide and Mr. Narayan Shivram Nadkarni, of the Bombay Government Records Office; Mr. D. B. Diskalkar and Mr. Bhusani of the Parasnis Museum, Satara; Mr. Mackie, Commissioner of Poona; Dr. T. G. P. Spear; Lieutenant-Colonel R. C. F. Schomberg, D.S.O., C.I.E., British Consul-General, Pondichéry; Sir William Foster, C.I.E.; Mr. Ottewill, Keeper of the India Office Records; Professor Reginald Coupland; Sir Verney Lovett; Mr. A. F. Abdul Ali, M.A.; Mr. D. R. Banaji; Nawab Hydar Nawaz Jung Bahadur; the Rt. Hon. Sir Akbar Hydari, P.C.; and Sir Patrick Cadell.



## CONTENTS

I. THE METCALFES	<i>page</i> 1
II. SCHOOLDAYS	9
III. THE LORD'S GOODNESS	21
IV. THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL	41
V. THE STATESMAN IN MAKING	59
VI. THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH	73
VII. THE DELHI RESIDENT	103
VIII. CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI	117
IX. POLITICAL DUTIES OF THE RESIDENT	137
X. THE GURKHA WAR	151
XI. THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF INDIA	162
XII. MAINLY PERSONAL	176
XIII. CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES	189
XIV. THE ELDER STATESMAN	232
XV. MEMBER OF COUNCIL	256
XVI. THE KING OF CALCUTTA	276
XVII. ENGLISH LIBERALS IN INDIA	297
XVIII. GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA	313
XIX. ENGLAND AGAIN	332
XX. GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA	342
XXI. LONGINGS AND MISERIES	355
XXII. CANADA	361
XXIII. FAILURE	379
XXIV. THE END	408

## APPENDIXES

A. LORD ELLENBOROUGH'S QUESTIONS TO LORD WILLIAM BENTINCK	413
B. MACAULAY'S EPITAPH ON METCALFE	416
C. THE METCALFE FAMILY	417
BIBLIOGRAPHY	419
INDEX	429





## ILLUSTRATIONS

CHARLES THEOPHILUS METCALFE AT THE AGE OF

FOURTEEN

*frontispiece*

*From the portrait by J. Hoppner, R.A., in possession of Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, present baronet.*

SOPHIA, LADY METCALFE

*facing page 6*

(née Debonnaire) Mother of Charles Theophilus Metcalfe.

*From the portrait by J. Hoppner, R.A., in possession of Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, present baronet.*

CHARLES THEOPHILUS METCALFE, IN CHILDHOOD

*facing page 10*

*From a portrait in possession of Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, present baronet. Artist unknown.*

A MAP OF INDIA

*facing page 48*

SIR THEOPHILUS METCALFE, FIRST BARONET *facing page 110*

Father of Charles Theophilus Metcalfe.

*From the portrait by J. Hoppner, R.A., in possession of Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, present baronet.*

MAHARAJA CHANDU LAL

*facing page 208*

*From a portrait in possession of his grandson, Hyderabad, Deccan.*

GEORGIANA SMYTH

*facing page 232*

Sister of Charles Theophilus Metcalfe.

*From a portrait lately in possession of Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, present baronet. Artist unknown.*

SIR CHARLES THEOPHILUS METCALFE, BART. *facing page 364*

Governor-General of Canada.

*From an engraving in possession of Mrs. Hardcastle, Ringwood, Hants: original believed to be in Ottawa. Artist unknown.*



## CHAPTER I

### THE METCALFES

Charles Metcalfe came of an old Yorkshire family. In Richard III's reign, a Thomas Metcalfe was Chancellor of the Duchy. Another Metcalfe's prowess at Agincourt eluded Shakespeare's notice, but not that of his King, who made him Sir James Metcalfe of Nappa. In the fifteenth century, Thomas Metcalfe, High Sheriff of Yorkshire, rode to Assizes attended by fifteen Metcalfes all mounted on white horses. In Charles II's time, Theophilus Metcalfe (born, 1610) won fame as 'master in the art of short writing', took his system to London and published it, and was allowed to add a hand and pen to the family scutcheon:

*Caesar was prais'd for his Dexterity  
In Feates of warr, and martiall chevalry;  
And no less famous art thou for thy skill  
In nimble tuning of thy Silver quill.<sup>1</sup>*

Charles Metcalfe's father, the first baronet, had the pen and hand on his coat of arms; and every Metcalfe has the name Theophilus or Theophila.

Charles Metcalfe must be reckoned in that Anglo-Irish company whose mark has been cut so deep in British-Indian history. Shortly after the Revolution of 1688, a Theophilus Metcalfe, believed to be the shorthand writer's son or grandson, settled in Ireland, where he practised with success as a barrister.<sup>2</sup> His son Thomas Theophilus was an officer in the King's Army; and his grandson, also Thomas Theophilus, was born in 1745 and sent

<sup>1</sup>Inscription under Portrait.

<sup>2</sup>*The Bengal Obituary*, 262.

## THE METCALFES

to India in 1767 as a cadet, with a letter of introduction to Robert Clive. Clive had left the country when he reached it, and Metcalfe found himself so friendless that he called on his commanding officer to tender his resignation. He was invited to join him and others at breakfast, where a gust of hilarious anecdotal conversation dispersed his depression, and the resignation was never offered.<sup>1</sup> He soon obtained the post of 'Agent for Military Stores'—'a situation in those days the most lucrative in the Company's service'<sup>2</sup>—and for him, as for Clive, 'quartermastering' proved the gate to fortune. He mastered its subtleties; and by it (Kaye opines, 'doubtless')<sup>3</sup> he became wealthy.

Nine years after Thomas Theophilus Metcalfe reached India, Miss Susannah Debonnaire arrived in Madras, after a journey which even for those days must have been noteworthy. Her father, who had been a successful merchant at Fort St. George (Madras), had left his two daughters in England to be educated, and had settled at the Cape of Good Hope, then a Dutch colony. They came out to him in 1776, intending to stay; but 'it was deemed expedient that the young ladies should pursue their voyage to Madras', in which voyage the younger 'died under very melancholy circumstances'.<sup>4</sup> These circumstances, as related by the survivor, merit something fuller than Kaye's discreet précis. Miss Debonnaire's own account cannot be improved upon. Possibly the abundance of her material necessitated some compression of style. But, since she found the writing 'agreeable', we may assume that the laconic summary was suited to the temperament of one who was afterwards Charles Metcalfe's grimly unemotional and businesslike mother.

Novr. 31, 1776

This is the first opportunity I have had of writing to my dear Mrs. Speidall and shall think the time I am writing to her the most agreeable that I have past since I have been in India.

<sup>1</sup>See p. 34 of this book.

<sup>2</sup>William Hickey, *Memoirs*, iii, 164.

<sup>3</sup>J. W. Kaye, *Life of Lord Metcalfe*, i, 3.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* i, 4.

## THE METCALFES

We had a very Pleasant Passage but tedious being above six months, we were becalmed six weeks under the Line, indeed I think we were a parcel of Jobs, to bear it with the Patience we did. I was sick but three days, while it lasted was so bad, that I thought I should have died; but if I begin to make my comment on the Passage, I shall fill a volume instead of a sheet and tire my Dear Friends Patience.

We arrived at the Cape of Good Hope in Perfect Health on the 26th of April; found I a Father and a most Indulgent one in my opinion, he supplied our wishes (one excepted) much more our wants, but in the eye of the World he was condemned, I acknowledge with Reason, but some allowances are to be made, not for introducing us to her, which my dear Mrs. S. he did; he seemed happy to see us but embarrassed; after we went ashore he took us to his house, and begged to Introduce a worthy Woman, you might have knocked me down with a feather when she entered the room with a Fine Boy of a year old in her arms, and a Girl of five years old holding her hand. Tears gushed out of my eyes, what could I do?

I hurried it off as well as I could: do not think my dear Cousin I inform you of this that you may reproach my Father, far from it, but as it is the Preface to a melancholy affair it is Compulsion, as I cannot tell you one without the other; otherwise it is the duty of every child, to hide their Parents faults, not to expose them.

My Father, the first opportunity spoke to me as follows. 'My dear Sussey choose either to remain at the Cape or go on to Madras, the First I wish on my own account, as I should be happy to have you with me, the latter on yours, your future happiness is to be considered. I have many friends at that Settlement. Lord Pigot my chief under whose protection you will be and make no doubt you will reap great Benefit from his Notice he being Governor of the Place.

We then chose to go on, first because my Father approves of it, second because his house was not a suitable or fit situation for

## THE METCALFES

us; we were with him but five days, and then left him, you may be sure my dear cous with regret.

On leaving him he desired me to give myself no uneasiness saying that Mrs. Dapoint, for this is her name, should not be much the better for his money, he should provide for her children, settle his money and come and live with his children; had he not had her he should have married, he wanted some one to look after his house, but now he had no Plea but to join the children of his Dear Wife, in whose company he had found himself happy but whose absence he should feel with greater force.

After I had been on board a day I was taken in great agony and the Day after my sister, our illness had the symptoms of Poison, we layed in a most deplorable state for some time. At the end of five weeks it Pleased Providence to release my sister on the 5 day of June. O my dear Mrs. S! what a day that was for me, my situation was truly Pitiable. I, hardly able to stand, they dragged me out of the Cabin more Dead than alive, indeed I often wonder how I survive it: no Lady on board to comfort me; and when they were aknocking the nails in her coffin, it was like so many Daggers in my heart, such a spectacle I never saw, swelled as big as three people and great holes all over her body big enough to put nutmegs; we neither of us sleep with our eyes shut, they were so swelled; to have the most convincing proof I could of her being Poisoned, I had her opened proof positive. I was much worse than her, but the reason of it being fatal to her she was of a grosser habit of body: the attention of the surgeon, the kindness of the Capt., the Humanity of the whole ship deserves my grateful acknowledgment. You ask me who we think is the author: it is hard to fathom but one cannot help suspecting. I do not like to say who my suspicions fall on, for fear you should think it ill nature, we neither eat nor drank out of my Fathers house. The day we left Mrs. Dapoint said at dinner, 'Miss Debonnaire, I am sure you must be tired of mutton, so have fricasseed you some chicken with my own hand.' We both eat of it, she did not touch it.

## THE METCALFES

I continued till I got to Madras. Capt. Baggin introduced a Major Smith who fell in Love, and we was married the 24th of August 1776 he is on the Bengal Establishment. Brother to General Smith in England whom you I daresay have heard of. We left Madras on Sept. 7th and arrived at Bengal the 22nd of Sept. I have been here scarce out of my bed, so am not able to give you a perfect account of the Country, and will defer that to my next. I must now beg you acceptance of a schawl and a Bottle of attar of Roses. I do not know if its Perfume is that you will like, but it is reckoned a great rarity even in this country, when it can be got, but they are both too insignificant for my dear Cous, but I flatter myself she will receive them as it meant as a remembrance of her kindness. Major Smith joins me in best respect to Mr. Speidall and kind love to Mamma and Sister and your acceptance of the same and the best wishes from my Dear Mrs. Speidall

Your unalterable Friend

SUSANNAH SMITH

Compliments to all inquiries.

The husband whose acquisition Miss Debonnaire reports in so matter-of-fact a manner died, and in 1782 she married Major Metcalfe. They both appear in Hickey's *Memoirs*. 'At Margate, I first became acquainted with Mr. Metcalfe, then a Captain, or young Major, in the East India Company's Service, since become (especially in his own estimation) a prodigious great man, having for several years been a baronet, an M.P., and an India Director.'<sup>1</sup> In September, 1780, Major Metcalfe included Hickey in 'a very jolly set', at his house in Suffolk Street, London. The set included General Richard Smith, known as 'the cheese-monger',<sup>2</sup> and his fine young son, 'who had, I know not why, been nicknamed Tippoo'. Hickey, 'in those days a great promoter of hilarity', invited the hardest and longest drinking to repeat

<sup>1</sup>*Memoirs*, i, 277 (August, 1780).

<sup>2</sup>From an incident in St. Helena, related by Hickey elsewhere.



## THE METCALFES

the rite as his guests, a week later, when 'we had as usual a hard batch of drinking and were very merry, keeping it up until an early hour of the morning'.<sup>1</sup>

Hickey returned to Bengal, 1783, and there 'found my Margate acquaintance' Military Storekeeper ('by most perseveringly courting the heads of the Government'), and married to the widow of Major Smith, 'brother of the far-famed General Richard Smith of cheesemongery celebrity'. 'This fair dame (who is now Lady Metcalfe, her husband having purchased the title of Baronet)' did not receive her husband's former boon-companion as enthusiastically as he expected. Calcutta society was very short of women with any pretensions to beauty, a slight degree of it making the possessor almost notorious. Hickey therefore felt the humiliation of being snubbed by Mrs. Metcalfe (who more than satisfied contemporary standards). His revenge was to assure his readers that she 'had no one merit to recommend her, at least as far as I could discover'. Yet, 'having expressed these unfavourable sentiments of the lady, it is only candour to admit that everyone did not see with my eyes, for Mr. William Pawson, an old Civil Servant of the Company under the Bengal establishment, was so deeply enamoured with her charms that, although she had not a single guinea in the world, he proposed marrying and settling a handsome sum upon her, an offer she spurned with the utmost scorn, notwithstanding which the unhappy lover persevered in his endeavours to make her relent, renewing his attack three different times, all equally unsuccessful. He was as worthy a creature as ever breathed, but clearly not the highest genius'.<sup>2</sup>

Hickey glances back in Mrs. Metcalfe's history, to tell us that her first husband, Major Smith, left his widow destitute, whereupon a close friend of her father and husband, Mr. Bromley, an attorney 'of great eminence in the Mayor's Court of Madras and a truly respectable man,' received her as one of his own children, paid her debts and set her up with money and 'an ample store of

<sup>1</sup>*Memoirs*, i, 284.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* iii, 164 ff.



SOPHIA, LADY METCALFE  
(née Debonnaire) Mother of Charles Metcalfe  
*From the portrait by J. Hoppner, R.A., in the possession of  
Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, present baronet*



## THE METCALFES

clothes and necessities which she was extremely bare of'.<sup>1</sup> She fell ill, and change of air was recommended, so he paid her voyage to Calcutta, and gave her letters of introduction which led to her meeting Major Metcalfe. She wrote back making large promises if her benefactor should ever need help, but when this did happen she and her husband (according to Hickey) refused to do anything, so that finally Mr. Bromley took the matter to the Calcutta Supreme Court, where the Metcalfes were ordered to pay his full claim, with ten per cent. interest.

We learn too from Hickey, that Major Metcalfe was one of the three partners<sup>2</sup> of the Bengal Bank, an enterprising piece of business pioneering. 'The emoluments . . . were immense, their notes being current as cash all over the British Territories in Asia and in circulation to an amount almost incredible.' Hickey thinks the partners 'clearly ought' to have 'minded their bank and that only'. But they had extensive other interests,<sup>3</sup> some of which failed, bringing heavy litigation and finally ruining the bank.

Hickey gives two other glimpses of Major Metcalfe, one of him arbitrating a dispute in the former's favour (January 16, 1784), and another of his being called in to make a sick man's will, on board ship in 1785. At Major Metcalfe's suggestion the will was postponed, on account of the testator's condition; and next day the latter apparently recovered, to collapse and die just before the ship reached England. As a result, the dead man's fortune of £300,000 went, by an earlier will, to his natural daughter, who married Lord Carbury; and his widow, being dissatisfied, went out to India and prosecuted claims against the East India Company, out of which she did fairly well. She married a Lieutenant Nowell, who afterwards left the Company's service, and

<sup>1</sup>Evidently Major Smith died while on duty in South India.

<sup>2</sup>One of the other two was Jacob Rider, of the Civil Service, and afterwards godfather of Charles Metcalfe.

<sup>3</sup>These facts modify Kaye's 'doubtless', when surmising that Major Metcalfe's fortune all came from his quartermastering.

## THE METCALFES

made a fortune in indigo; 'and' (Hickey concludes) 'they are now enjoying themselves amidst the highest degree of splendour in England.' The innuendo is that the whole story in some way or other followed from Major Metcalfe's entirely reasonable advice to postpone the will-making.

Hickey as a witness is not hampered by excessive nervousness about accuracy. Nevertheless, the Metcalfes emerge from his gossip with a clearness that rarely belongs to our knowledge of great men's parents. The father is seen as good-humoured, incessantly active and planning, with a reputation for level-headedness and integrity. The mother is reserved, her thoughts her own and remaining her own, under a frost of chill repression and will-power. Both are determined to make their way; and they make it, despite the failure of a business here or a bank there. They have few illusions about society or mankind, and their experience had not been one which illusions could have survived. The mother is the lonelier and stronger personality of the two.

Thomas Metcalfe and Susannah Smith married in 1782, he being thirty-seven and she twenty-six. Five of their children lived: Theophilus John,<sup>1</sup> Charles Theophilus,<sup>2</sup> Emily Theophila, Thomas Theophilus, Georgiana Theophila. In those days parents took thought for their sons' careers early, and on May 6, 1785, at Major Metcalfe's request, Major-General Stibbert recommended to the Governor-General, John Macpherson, the appointment of Charles Theophilus Metcalf,<sup>3</sup> aged three months and one week, as 'a Minor Cadet upon this establishment'.<sup>4</sup> He was accordingly a soldier even before he was a civilian. In this year the Metcalfes returned to settle in England.

<sup>1</sup>Born, September 19, 1783.

<sup>2</sup>Born, January 30, 1785.

<sup>3</sup>So spelled in the record.

<sup>4</sup>Calcutta, Imperial Government of India Records, 1216, May 9, No. 4.

## CHAPTER II

### SCHOOLDAYS

---

'As schoolfellows we were continually squabbling, and I believe, from the different turn of mind, which you must have observed, our parents thought it would be the case through life. Thank God, those who saw us in Bengal must convince themselves of the contrary, and I may safely say, that there never were two brothers more sincerely attached.—Theophilus Metcalfe to J. W. Sherer, 1806.

'The difference in our habits, which was acquired in our childhood, will probably stick to us . . . but in fraternal affection and friendship Theophilus and I will ever have, I am sure, the same mind and spirit.—Charles Metcalfe to J. W. Sherer, 1806.

---

**T**he Debonnaire connection determined the choice of a first school for Charles and Theophilus, an academy at Bromley kept by a Mr. Tait:

'I remember a fine-looking old gentleman, of the name of Debonnaire, who, with his family, occupied the pew in church next to that of our school, and whose broad shoulders and peculiar coat of remarkable pattern are impressed on my memory. . . I also remember "Aunt Winch", as she was called, who used to board and lodge in Tait's house, and had my brother Theophilus and myself sometimes in her room.'<sup>1</sup>

Charles Metcalfe never overlooked an obligation that he thought he had incurred. When Mr. Tait died, a quarter of a century later, his former pupil settled a pension on his widow, which his will continued to her after his own death, as long as she lived. As Kaye remarks, in another connection,<sup>2</sup> 'gratitude towards the trainers of our youth is a plant of no common

<sup>1</sup>Charles Metcalfe in 1841.

<sup>2</sup>Dr. Goodall, of Eton.

## SCHOOLDAYS

growth. We remember their manual dexterity long after anything else.<sup>1</sup>

The younger boy's earliest memories began in the shadow of a handsome and petted elder brother. That Charles had the sounder qualities was recognised grudgingly and slowly, and almost with resentment. Their father was too variously busy to be much with his children, whose care fell on their mother, schooled by experience into the conviction that duty and worldly success were life's purpose, and the rest but leather and prunella. For her younger son she had little affection, and whenever she visited the school even his playfellows knew that Theophilus was her favourite. Theophilus had all the gifts: the gaiety and handsome showing which the fairy godmothers reserved for the luckier Metcalfes. To Charles they had handed out the satyr-mask that was to cause him mortification throughout his early manhood.

In April, 1789, assiduous canvassing won its reward, and Major Metcalfe was elected a Director of the East India Company. He proceeded to add to this distinction a directorship of the Globe Insurance, and in 1796 became M.P. for Abingdon. In Parliament he proved a soundly Tory back-bencher, Pitt's staunch supporter, active behind the scenes, a frequent (and unexciting) speaker, with field-days when Indian affairs were discussed; 'altogether a reliable man', who 'had brought with him no languor or lassitude from the East'.<sup>2</sup> His baronetcy came in 1802.

Charles left Mr. Tait's academy, September, 1795, and in January, 1796, followed Theophilus to Eton, entering as an Oppidan and boarding with his tutor Dr. Goodall (afterwards provost and headmaster).

Charles found at Eton his deepest and most abiding happiness. On the voyage out to India, he began (October 21, 1800) a poem, *Eton*, in imitation of Pope's *Windsor Forest*; and his school haunted him in Calcutta, where he wrote in his Diary,

<sup>1</sup>*Life of Metcalfe*, ii, 99.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* i, 4, 5.



CHARLES THEOPHILUS METCALFE  
In Childhood

*From a portrait in the possession of Sir Theophilus Metcalfe,  
present baronet. Artist unknown*





## SCHOOLDAYS

Wednesday, May 6, 1801: 'Anniversary of my leaving Eton. The last time I saw Goodall, Tonson and Grose—a sad, sad day.' Yet he spent there only four years and a few weeks.

He showed neither field nor water prowess, unless one mysterious episode be held an exception. 'I heard the boys shouting' (Dr. Goodall used to relate), 'and went out and saw young Metcalfe riding on a camel. So you see he was always orientally inclined.' The exploit was admittedly uncharacteristic. Kaye can hardly conceal surprise, tinged with contempt, that there should ever have been a boy so unathletic, and recurs to this flaw repeatedly. 'I would rather think of a fine open-spirited boy', he writes sadly, 'boating, swimming, playing, even getting into mischief at school, and in the holidays spending half his time on the back of a pony.'<sup>1</sup> However, since he cannot think of such a boy, he has to make the best of it; and Charles Metcalfe's record is now open to all the world to see. Kaye therefore concludes, like a scientist compelled to acknowledge that a manifest breach of natural law has taken place: 'If he had been captain of the boats, and beaten Harrow and Winchester off his own bat, he could not have grown into a manlier character.'

At Eton, the divergence between Charles and his brother widened, and they had little to do with each other. They clashed fiercely when they met, and their mother said that she dreaded the holidays, when they were compulsorily together. Her own letters can hardly have helped to heal their differences. To a sensitive boy (and few men that ever lived have been more sensitive than Charles Metcalfe) they must have been a benumbing experience, encouraging as their writer meant them to be. Theophilus left Eton in 1799, and was soon 'tasting the sweets of independent life . . . falling in love, acting at masquerades, drinking his bottle of wine, and exhibiting', observes Kaye, 'other symptoms of premature manhood'.<sup>2</sup> To his undistinguished brother their mother was writing such advice as this:

'I am glad you persevere in your endeavours. You must suc-

<sup>1</sup>*Life of Metcalfe*, i, 17.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* i, 19.

## SCHOOLDAYS

ceed; but to acquire knowledge requires resolution, without which nothing can be attained. Mrs. S. made a very deep impression on me the other day, by telling me that a very clever man said, If a person would read three hours a day seriously, and well-chosen books, for four years, he could not fail of being so clever and able, that he might fill any office or place in the kingdom—that the Ministers would be happy to have his abilities . . . I have read more regularly every day since her observation. I wish it had made as deep an impression on Theophilus—but books seem to give him no pleasure. What a pity! With his quickness and comprehension, he would, if he chose, be a very shining character. I think, if I were you, I would adopt the plan.'

The brothers corresponded after the elder had left Eton—with this result, that in November, 1799, their long-standing quarrel flared up, and over politics. Charles was a Tory, a follower of Pitt; and Theophilus, who was against the Government, was scornfully told that he was 'a democrat'. No young man of spirit could take such a term from an unathletic younger brother. Theophilus, after pointed criticism of the Cabinet's recent mismanagement over a wide field, accused Charles of insolence, and requested that their correspondence should cease. 'You may (by dint of application) have made yourself a better classical scholar than I (by idleness) have made myself; but still, I do not lower my abilities, in my own opinion, so as to need advice from a younger brother.' Brackets have rarely been used to neater literary purpose.

Charles Metcalfe's Eton days were happy in friendships, and in abounding intellectual activity. He never willingly left his books. Whole holidays were but a chance for more intensive exploration of the question as to whether Chatterton were the author of 'Rowley', and for more Ariosto, more Homer, more Lucan, more Virgil, '&c'. Here are some consecutive (and entirely ordinary) entries from his *Diary*, for March, 1800, which show the work and relaxations of a boy scarcely turned fourteen:

## SCHOOLDAYS

*Friday, 21st.*

Whole school-day. Read Horace. Lucan. Read Bryant's *Dissertation on Rowley's Poems*, tending to prove they were actually written by him. Drank tea with Hervey. Read Ariosto with Neville and Shaw. Read Xenophon with my tutor.

*Saturday, 22nd.*

Common Saturday. Read Callimachus. Continued Bryant's *Dissertation*. Saw the College Library. Read Xenophon with my tutor. Read Ariosto with Neville and Shaw.

*Sunday, 23rd.*

Learnt part of the Fifth Satire of Juvenal for my tutor. Dr. Norbury, the deceased Fellow, was buried in the church. Did theme. Read Ariosto with, &c. Read Bryant's *Dissertation*. Drank tea with Tonson.

*Monday, 24th.*

Half-holiday. Read Homer. Did lyrics. Read Bryant's *Dissertation*.

*Tuesday, 25th.*

Whole holiday. Wrote a French letter. Read Bryant's *Dissertation*.

This *Diary*, Metcalfe wrote on its cover, was to be 'the general rendezvous not only of my actions, but of my thoughts'. The boy was in deliberate rebellion, and felt he must take himself extremely seriously. Nothing is important outside its context; and the context of this episode was the small self-sufficing world of upper school boys and their tutors. It showed the grimly immovable resolution for which Metcalfe became famous, decisive at every great crisis of his life. It is irrelevant that in this first instance he was in the wrong, and rather childishly so.

He and his friends were determined to drink tea late in the evening, defying their tutor's prohibition. That prohibition seems common-sense enough. But it is a relief to find something

## SCHOOLDAYS

so normal as indiscipline, running a bright thread through the terrifyingly earnest days:

*Monday, 3rd.*

Whole school-day. Not well. . . . Drank tea after six in Hervey's room, according to agreement. Afraid the plan of bringing in that custom won't succeed. Passed the evening in Hervey's room. Supped with Neville; went to bed full of turkey.

*Tuesday, 4th.*

Whole holiday. Not well. Employed at verses; good theme. Read the 'Age of Louis XIV'. . . . Heard of Parson Grey's being drunk. Drank tea solo. . . .<sup>1</sup>

*Wednesday, 5th.*

. . . Drank tea in Neville's room, according to agreement, after six. My hopes gain on my fears, though the latter are still predominant. . . .

*Thursday, 6th.*

. . . Tutor jawed about drinking tea after six. Drank tea with Tonson. . . .

*Friday, 7th.*

. . . Drank tea with Shaw, according to our convention, after six. Tutor jawed with great spirit. Destruction of our plan must in the end come on; we are at our last struggle; all our endeavours now are the exertions of despair, and we must only think how to resign nobly; in such cases as these, unanimity is required to obtain success, and that has not been obtained. . . .

. . . . .

*Monday, 10th.*

Whole school-day; did some Homer. Mem. These epic poets are very free in their ideas. . . . Æneas has got a stone in his hand in the act of throwing it at Achilles, who is rushing with his sword drawn on Æneas; but Neptune, who perceives destruction im-

<sup>1</sup>Presumably because his fellow-rebels had all used the whole holiday to go out.

## SCHOOLDAYS

pending over Æneas, is determined to ward it off; accordingly addresses the other gods in a speech of sixteen lines, to which Juno makes answer in one of nine; in the mean time, we must suppose the stone pendent in the air, and Achilles in the act of rushing forward, but both very complacently waiting till their godships have finally decided. Perhaps it would have been better to have introduced Minerva with her ægis, turning these heroes into stone till the speeches were done with. . . . Gave tea to Neville, Hervey, and Shaw, after six, according to agreement. Had a most tremendous jaw from my tutor, who said nothing but that it was a serious inconvenience, but could not bring one argument to prove that it was so. After supper did verses.

. . . . .

*Friday, 14th.*

. . . Drank tea with Hervey after six. We have conquered; and my tutor, not finding an argument against us, was obliged to consent; so that now we do it lawfully. Had it not been for our last despairing struggles we should have failed. . . .

Immediately before this battle with his tutor, Charles received an unexpected proposal. Theophilus, spending the Christmas holidays of 1799–1800 with a friend, had been surprised by a letter from their father telling him he was to be sent into the China trade, a monopoly of the East India Company. The China writerships were so few and so much more lucrative than the Indian ones,<sup>1</sup> that the Directors made a practice of reserving them for their own sons. Theophilus was shocked at the suggestion that his gifts should be wasted in the remote East, to make a superfluous fortune when one was already waiting for him to enjoy at home some day. He therefore wrote to Charles, in January, 1800, and pointed out how much better it would be if he went instead:

‘When I consider of the difference between you and me, I am

<sup>1</sup>‘There being no easier and more rapid road to fortune’: Kaye, *Life of Metcalfe*, i, 19.

## SCHOOLDAYS

astonished. You, a studious grave fellow, studying five hours a day; me, a wild, idle dog, who does not look into a book from the rising to the setting of the sun. You, who would like to go to China to make a large fortune; me, who would like to stay in England and spend what I have. . . . Added to this difference between us, another great one is, you would not give a damn for a glass of wine, and I, with pleasure, will drink a bottle with any friend.' 'I know not why', he concludes, 'I should be refused remaining in England, when I seem so anxiously to wish it. . . . What, because the world styles it good, is a young man to be sent to a place which least of all suits his disposition, to be shut up for ten or twelve years from all relations and friends?'

Charles, however, could not see things in this light. He refused, and was firm against repeated urging, asking his brother not to be offended. Theophilus good-naturedly agreed: 'as it is a maxim of mine first to please myself, and then my friends, I cannot be angry at your doing the same.' He asked Charles only to keep their correspondence secret, 'and you will see hereafter that I was your brother'. The request was granted, and the promise fulfilled.

Charles's refusal had been unexpected, though taken with such good grace. He had no suspicion that their father was planning for him the less valuable (but much sought-after) nomination to a writership in Bengal. He went back from the Christmas holidays, to what—to his lasting regret—was to be his last term at Eton: 'I left it at the age of fifteen, a time when my ideas were ripening—when I was attached to the studies in the pursuit of which I was engaged, had objects towards which I was directing my exertions, and had formed plans which promised success. Five years more might well have been spared to Eton and a University, after which there would have been plenty of time for India.'

Those 'plans which promised success' had no connection with either the India or the China trade, or with the East at all (to ambitious spirits an arena of very subordinate importance). Buona-

## SCHOOLDAYS

parte was threatening England; and the dreaming (and working) boy was imagining for himself a rôle of outstanding greatness in his own land, not in its obscure and distant Eastern dependency. Looking back to this last year at school, as to a period glowing in memory, Metcalfe wrote later:

‘Ah! those were days of real happiness! In those cloisters has my youthful and ardent imagination planned to itself a life of greatness, glory, and virtue—there have I been the orator, and discussed important topics in the senate-house—there have I been the statesman prescribing terms to the wondering nations of Europe—there have I concluded peaces, commanded armies, or headed a party struggling for liberty; or, descending from these lofty views—there have I found myself in private life, in the enjoyment of domestic happiness, the honoured patron of a neighbouring hamlet.’

There was not as yet much glamour about the deeds of Englishmen in India. They were a despised and distrusted clan. The stigma of vulgar ostentation attached to them, as adventurers of a particularly unscrupulous kind, who returned to be ‘Nabobs’.

Theophilus was to go to the East India Company’s factory at Canton; Charles was to tread a stonier and longer course to fortune. Yet the latter was one which for many still brought wealth with reasonable swiftness; and in the gigantic haul of treasure when Seringapatam fell Major Metcalfe saw the return of the stirring times when he collected his own fortune. Lord Wellesley had made an impressive start—alarming the Directors, who saw dividends vanish into campaigns whose loot was dissipated in prize-money to victors on the spot. Disagreeing with their fears, Major Metcalfe stood by the Governor-General, one of the few who did. There was no nonsense of considering what his sons themselves wanted. Out in the East fortunes were being made, and out to the East he had powers of nomination. His sons therefore went there.

They took disappointment well and entered into a friendship never again broken. The few weeks left of England each spent in



## SCHOOLDAYS

his own fashion. Not altogether, however; for Charles did what Theophilus had done so often, fell in love. It was with a girl slightly older, and the wound went deep. On April 2, 1800, his *Diary* noted: 'Ball at home. I was first introduced to Miss D—; danced with her.' The next page is cut out. Other references followed quickly: to another 'very pleasant' ball at Portland Place (the Metcalfes' London house), when he 'danced four dances with Miss D—'; to an evening spent with the girl's parents, 'at Lady B—'s. Supped there; a most delightful party.' Next day, Charles called to see Miss D—('sat an hour with her'). Nothing came of it, except unhappy remembrance. Theophilus, whose embarkation was delayed, wrote from Torbay, as one with 'experience in such matters', to advise his brother. But their mother dismissed it as a foolish wasting of time by a boy who should be getting on with making a fortune. Miss D. herself probably saw nothing very unusual or attractive in the diffident, excessively plain-featured younger Metcalfe, though they corresponded for some time after he went to India.

Others, however, were beginning to see something unusual. Despite the tea-drinking mutiny, there was deep affection between Charles and his tutor. Dr. Goodall, a year or two later, asked an officer home from Bengal if he knew Charles Metcalfe. (Hearing that he did) 'Then you know a very good young man—a very superior young man. I have done for him that I never did for anyone else. I wrote a letter in his favour to Lord Wellesley'.

Charles paid a farewell visit to Eton; and one to Mr. Tait's academy, taking the opportunity to say good-bye to Aunt Winch ('on which occasion she gave me £2, encumbered with a laudable injunction to purchase the *Whole Duty of Man*'). A few days later (June 14) he spent his last day with his family, then accompanied to Portsmouth 'my dear father'—to whom, as to his sisters, he was deeply attached, more so than to their somewhat grim mother—and after a short stay together Charles embarked, to drift about the Channel while the East India fleet waited for good winds. A dreary period, in which he exercised

## SCHOOLDAYS

his already exceptional will-power, noting in his *Diary* that he 'held out' against sickness, though repeatedly 'very squeamish'.

They sailed in earnest at last. Weeks of study followed, of such oriental literature as he could lay hands on, variegated by some not very serious work at Hindustani ('read Moors') with an elderly civilian and some very serious poetry addressed to Miss D. On September 22, the *Skelton Castle* reached St. Helena. The protracted voyages of those days required such breaks as were possible, and a week was given up to the island. This time Charles spent largely on horseback, to his own astonishment. 'But the animals here are so quiet, and sure-footed, and careful, that I should not be afraid to trust myself asleep on them.'

This was the first time he had seen Nature in any mood except that of the tranquil Thames. The roads were 'situated on the edge of precipices'; and this spice of danger, added to the contrast of the wild and varied scenery, called out a cry of exultation such as very little in his life was able to evoke.

'From Rosemary we walked to a ridge of rocks, piled loose one on another by the hand of nature. From this ridge you look down on an immense abyss, which from its depth and steepness is called Eternity; and, indeed, any despairing lover might in one instant, without any trouble or noise, put an end to his existence in one step; the appearance cannot be better described than by making use of the allegorical term, "Beauty in the lap of Horror." There are many other situations similar to this in the island which I had not an opportunity of seeing; their names will give a better idea of them than anything I can say; such as Purgatory, Break-neck Valley, Hold-fast Tom. . . . I found myself, for the first time in my life, when on High Peak, above the clouds. . . . I was inclined to loiter, when a cry of *descende caelo*, from Mr. Bazett, drove away my fanciful ideas; and I found, in descending, that there was more difficulty in scrambling down than in clambering up rocks.'

At last the six months of voyaging ended, and on the first day of the new century (January 1, 1801)—as if winds and tides had

## SCHOOLDAYS

chosen the date of his arrival, to symbolise the destiny which was to make him the most influential single actor in the immense events of the next generation in India—Metcalf entered the Hugli, the pilot having come on board the previous evening. The *Skelton Castle* proceeded to Kedgerree, where she anchored; and Metcalfe, at six in the afternoon of January 2, got 'into a chokey boat', which 'after a most tedious, disagreeable expedition', rowing all through the night and all next day, landed him in darkness, 'I know not where'. Presently he managed to get guidance to the house of Colvin, a wealthy merchant known to his father, 'where I got my baggage, and slept'.

He was not to see England again for thirty-seven years. His age was not quite sixteen, an average age for the men who were entering India as its rulers, and considerably above that of many. Very few, reading the story of the British in India, realise that it was the custom for our ancestors to start on their careers when to-day they might almost still be at preparatory schools. Warren Hastings's angry reference to 'mere boys' who were 'heavy-handed rulers of the people' is taken as mere rhetoric (a luxury Hastings rarely indulged in), whereas it was literal fact. The actual *education* of India's rulers took place, not in England or Scotland, but in a scene of shifting and dissolving empires. Their schools were battles and intrigues, and the schoolmasters were adventurers or aliens.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE LORD'S GOODNESS

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'Sir Charles Metcalfe was originally introduced into that service, of which he now is a principal ornament, under my special superintendence and care, at a very early age, at the recommendation of his highly respectable father, my steadfast friend.'—Lord Wellesley, July 26, 1839.

'I must eradicate from my mind that propensity to form romantic attachments which my youth and inexperience have encouraged. Never again will I nourish the seeds of rising friendship; never will I love the man who has not obtained by long intercourse my respect and esteem.'—Metcalfe, December 18, 1803.

'With the female sex the beauty of a man is everything . . . I believe there are very few indeed who consider worth as essential in a lover, and as few would regard it in the choice of a husband, did not selfishness lead them to do so. . . . Who would not discover that the writer of this is an ugly fellow?'—Charles Metcalfe, August, 1803.

'There are joys . . . in the pure love which exists between man and man, which cannot, I think, be surpassed in that more alloyed attachment between the opposite sexes, to which the name of love is in general exclusively applied.'—Metcalfe, November 7, 1824.

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Metcalfe reached India in the lull between two wars. Mysore had fallen and Tipu was dead; the decisive clash between British and Marathas was plainly to come. The Governor-General was resolved to regularise their relations on the basis of Maratha subordination, and to force a chance of doing this.

The coming war was regarded as part of the European struggle, which had entered on an embittered phase. Napoleon was considered the spearhead of jacobinical doctrine, dreaded then by the British ruling classes as Bolshevik doctrine was in the post-war years of this century. He had been triumphing in Europe. But his navy had been broken at Aboukir and his ally Tipu overwhelmed at Seringapatam. This was how it looked to the British in India; both victories were part of the one far-flung

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

battle. Nelson on the Nile, Harris on the Kaveri, commanded co-operating wings in the same Armageddon.

In Calcutta, indeed, under the domination of 'the glorious little man', as the imperious excited Governor-General was called, patriotic resolution blazed more fiercely than even in London. London had wide stretches of apathy, and scattered pockets of 'democrats' professed to find in the doctrines of revolutionary France those which their own land needed. But in India, where no one might land without the Company's leave, there was only one school of thought.

Attention was focussed on what the Marathas, Sindhia especially, were doing. Sindhia had reorganised his army on the European model, equipped with European artillery and trained by European officers and drill-sergeants. These were mainly French, and Lord Wellesley was presently to write that war had been undertaken to shatter 'the French state erected by M. Perron on the banks of the Jumna'. Towards this war his Secretariat, the centre of a web of investigation and command ceaselessly running throughout the inferior Presidencies, was working night and day. Sir John Shore's governor-generalship was not yet three years over, yet its dreaming inefficiency and quiescence were already a fast-dimming tradition.

The boy who entered the Hugli on the first morning of the new century was not immediately drawn into this vortex of fiery activity. He had come exceptionally furnished with introductions to the great, and aunts and godfathers were established in strategic centres. His father was known to many still in the Presidency, and was esteemed by the Governor-General as one of his few energetic friends in the Company's Direction, where his grandiose plans needed support. Calcutta abounded in Etonians, a close sodality. Charles Metcalfe, in revulsion from the immense tedium of the voyage just over, accepted the life of idleness into which so many hands of friendly beckoning summoned him; and for some weeks his *Diary* relates only expenditure and meals. 'Ordered a palanquin (160 rupees). Got a Khitmudgar,

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

Hircarrah, Masaulchee, and Tailor (January 5). 'Was introduced to Sir Alured Clarke and General Baynard. Dined with the Governor-General, who talked much about Eton. Went to Lady Anstruther's ball' (January 9). 'Shopping in the morning. Got a cocked-hat (20 rupees)' (January 10).

In the list of miscellaneous dinners and tiffins occur, as his hosts, the names of all the leading men of the settlement; the Governor-General, the Commander-in-Chief, a future Governor-General, the Chief Justice and Judges of the High Court.

It is usual to assert that officials in old days attained a far higher efficiency in the use of Indian vernaculars. There may be something in this; men were called to isolated service, and vast periods passed without their visiting England. Most had native mistresses. Yet a surprisingly select vocabulary, and a wayward and individual intonation and pronunciation, have accompanied many great Anglo-Indian careers. Of course, sheer absorption from environment made some into tolerable linguists; Malcolm (for example) could bandy badinage with an old friend who happened to be also a distinguished prostitute. But Malcolm's patron the Duke of Wellington—and countless others—never advanced beyond ability to scatter an occasional round of vernacular small-shot, a few necessary verbs and nouns, each a separate pellet. Doubtless they were aware of the existence of other parts of speech, and that the aborigines used syntactical subtleties to connect and modify these. But they decided early, like Sir Lancelot, that

*This quest is not for me,*

and speech remained where it began, in the imperative mood, the briefest and least teasing form of a language.

Bengali and other local tongues were ignored. Only Persian, the Court language, and Hindustani (Urdu)—'Moors'—the *lingua franca*, were studied; and in Persian, one of the few languages which can reasonably be called easy to learn, a high standard was often reached. Persian literature gave delight to

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

many, for the British in India included a considerable minority who possessed keen literary appreciation. Indeed, there was among them such widespread and critical reading of Persian poetry that it is strange that the taste did not communicate itself to people in England,<sup>1</sup> long before FitzGerald's translation of Omar Khayyam. Men like Malcolm, Jenkins, Elphinstone, Metcalfe, and in the next generation Alexander Burnes, studied Hafiz and Saadi, commenting on them in a manner which showed they had got into their very idiom and emotion, far closer than to those of Horace and Virgil at their schools.

Metcalfe's attention being officially drawn to the fact that Hindustani existed and that he was expected to do something about it, his *Diary* contains these consecutive entries:

*Sunday, January 18.*

Had a moonshee.

*Monday, January 19.*

Dismissed my moonshee, finding him of no use. Determined to teach myself.

The new teacher proved equally unsatisfactory; and on February 25 he attended Hindustani lectures, and two days later 'studied with my moonshee'. Again there was disappointment, for on April 23 he records: 'Got a new moonshee, the other having left with much insolence.' On April 29, he observes: 'I cannot boast of having applied so much as I ought, for of all disagreeable studies the first steps of a language are most disagreeable.'

One strong bond between Metcalfe and the Governor-General was a passionate love for Eton. Lord Wellesley's project now materialised, of a College at Fort William, as closely resembling Eton as possible, for the instruction of the Company's officers on first arrival. He justly considered it wrong to turn boys of fifteen or sixteen loose to govern an alien nation. Charles Metcalfe, symbolically and fitly, was the first student: ,

<sup>1</sup>I do not forget that Moore published *Lalla Rookh*, 1817.

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

*Monday, April 27.*

Read and signed the declaration, and was admitted into college, being the first ever admitted into the College of Fort William.'

On Monday, May 4, he repeated this rite in the Provost's chambers and 'signed my name to the Hindostanee, Persian, Greek, Italian, French and Latin languages'. This, his *Diary* adds 'particularly', was the anniversary of his taking leave at Eton of his old headmaster. Eight days later, 'Got a new moon-shee' reappears. This one proved more than satisfactory; and Metcalfe's gratitude, as we shall see later, was shown by an entirely individual generosity.

May 4, the day of his admission to the College, closed with a grand inaugural dinner, where the Founder, the Governor-General, 'was remarkably attentive to me'. On June 4, at a levée, again 'The Lord behaved to me with marked attention, and gave me a general invitation to Barrackpore. Such civility from Lord Wellesley is no common thing.'

It was not, indeed. Wellesley on his arrival in Calcutta had written tempestuously home, of how utterly revolting and 'disgusting' he found his new social surroundings. The women were even more depressing than the men; and he lived in solitary state, like a Royal Bengal Tiger, without even a friendly 'jackal to soothe the severity of my thoughts'. This disgusting society he had reduced to terrified subservience; and when he singled out from it any individual for kindly notice, that individual was notoriously marked for rapid advancement. 'The Lord' had looked on the son of Director Metcalfe, and approved him, first for his father's merits, then for his own.

Calcutta Etonians also approved him. The most ambitious and influential of the young civilians, already on the first step of that way to wealth and power which they all found, were banded together under the style of 'the Howe Boys' (Admiral Howe had recently died, a national hero). The advantages of having 'a gang' cannot be exaggerated; fraternities may be loathsome to



## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

those outside them, but it is wise to secure election to them. Without a gang, rarely can merit, however outstanding, escape frustration and misery. Inside a gang, we move forward in an exhilarating community of triumph. 'As iron sharpeneth iron, so does a man the countenance of his friend.'

Metcalf from the first had many gangs. He was a Howe Boy; and the Lord, like himself an enthusiastic Etonian, loved him. All this, joined to his ability and application, sent him at once ahead in a flying start.

But he was only sixteen, and desperately in love with a girl whom he worshipped as only adolescence can, without the least physical desire but only intense idealisation. She was far away, and her 'sensible letters heightened' his 'admiration'. The first glow of Calcutta social pleasures had faded, and he now knew well what disabilities were to accompany him always, in a world that valued bodily skill and perfection above all else. He took no exercise, and the hot weather induced black thoughts. He wrote, June 18, begging his father to let him leave India. 'On his answer depends my happiness in life.' This fact—that Charles Metcalfe, the last Company's man in pre-Mutiny days to reach the highest place of all, made such a request at the beginning of his great career—made a lasting impression on the next generation. It was constantly cited at school speech-days, to encourage youth to look beyond momentary dejection.

While he was awaiting his father's reply, the College's first examinations followed. Metcalfe was placed fifth in Hindustani, and his essay 'was one of the ten best sent in to the Lord'. The Lord told him 'he considered my progress greater than that of any other'. There was balm in this; but it was dissipated in the vacation, when during a pig-sticking week 'I was out of my element'. Gloom continued to deepen. 'Let mankind say what they will, a pretty face is an excellent introduction, and before now I have had to regret the bad effects of an ugly phiz—particularly with the ladies.' He wrote 'repeated and urgent letters' home.

'I cannot exist here; the idea that my father may refuse renders

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

me thoroughly miserable....I find how much inferior the most excruciating bodily torment is to mental agony.....I have been exceedingly unwell throughout the rains.'

His second term at the College 'passed over my head without any attention to my studies—my mind being too much occupied with the thought of my melancholy situation'. His thoughts took on a religious colour. He became 'willing to believe that the sufferings I at present labour under will be shortly removed'.

He was thinking also of posterity, and of what it would have to say about him. 'No man can be forced into greatness without ambition.... No one possesses more ambition than I do; and am I destined to be great?' 'If I quit this country, I may be; and it is one of the reasons for my desiring it so ardently. I cannot help thinking, should I hereafter be great, of the fervour with which my biographer will seize upon these slight memorandums, and record them to an eager public as a proof of my indulging in youth, and in distant climes, the idea of becoming a great character on the theatre of the world.'

How hateful his present mode of life continued to appear, he reveals continually. 'Language is the most disgusting; history is the most delightful of studies; law is the most perplexing; politics the most noble of professions. To be an independent member of the British House of Commons is the highest honour next to being Prime Minister of Great Britain.' This was the ambition which stayed with him longest, long after he had left India.

But he was not a man to let dreams blind him to present reality. And friends were working for him. His godfather Jacob Rider, who held the most lucrative of all civil appointments, that of Collector at Benares, in August wrote him a letter, in tone perfectly adapted to one in Metcalfe's unhappy situation, prematurely a man while his emotional life was still a boy's:

'In spite of your present dislike to the country, I have been planning stations for you, in one of which I hope in due time to see your appointment. Amongst others, it has occurred to me that Colonel Collins, who is under great obligations to your

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

father, should endeavour to get you appointed his assistant. . . . It does not at all follow that military men are always to hold diplomatic appointments, and I should hope, old as I am, to see you Governor-General's agent to Scindiah. If you are for a rapid fortune, for a scramble, and to run off with what you can get, you should get appointed assistant to a collector. These principles, I trust, you are not come out with, and I should be sorry to hear of your getting into that line, or as assistant to either of the judges of Adawlut. . . . I say to you as I would to my own son—keep as long out of the judicial line, and the line of collections, as you can—altogether, I hope, or till that some great reform takes place in those lines. Recollect, my good fellow, that I write to you in perfect confidence, and not for general communication. . . .

'Your dislike to the country can't be greater than mine was for the first twelvemonth; it will wear off, I am convinced, but perhaps not so soon in a college. However, when you reflect what satisfaction it will give your father and mother to hear of your getting a medal, I am sure you will study hard to deserve one, and then I will attack Collins. . . .'

Metcalfe decided that he had accumulated sufficient merit with the Lord, to draw on it to the extent of even seeking admission to the political or diplomatic service—then, as now, the most varied and attractive, and mainly a military preserve. He was successful, and was appointed, December 29, Assistant to Colonel Collins, Resident at Sindhia's camp. Collins had fallen in with Rider's suggestion to ask for him. Metcalfe's parents were overjoyed when they heard that their son had gone to be with 'Jack Collins'.

He set out for Ujjain, where Sindhia's camp was, on January 14, 1802, by palanquin, the swiftest method of travel and usual for long journeys.<sup>1</sup> He reached Benares on the 19th, a feat which

<sup>1</sup>They 'travel at the rate of five or six miles an hour, carried by four bearers, and attended by four more to relieve each other . . . they run thirty miles on end, without thinking much of it' (Lord Minto, June 29, 1807).

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

better than any words conveys to us the picture of the Company's perfect system of relays (on the main roads only), and of the bearers running over the long miles, hour after hour. After two days with his godfather, he went on from Benares to Cawnpore, where 'I found all my friends and relations, and was very happy'. Here was Lord Wellesley also, on tour; and Metcalfe was allowed to join him for a brief holiday, going forward with him, January 30, by 'very agreeable marches (considered the whole time as one of his family)', to Lucknow, where he stayed from February 5 to February 14, immersed in that more than imperial pomp which delighted the Governor-General:

'Every display of Asiatic and European magnificence was to be seen in our procession. We had a large body of European soldiery (the finest sight we know of in England), at the same time everything of Asiatic splendour which the mind can fancy. The innumerable concourse of elephants (the grandeur of which animal seems to have appointed it particularly for a procession of this nature), decorated with costly trappings, was no small part of my admiration. . . . The tops of the houses (with which we were brought to a level by our elephants) were covered with musicians and dancing-girls; the streets under our feet crowded with millions anxious to see so grand a procession. Everything recalled to my memory the "Arabian Nights", for every description of any such procession which I ever met with in history, even the celebrated Triumph of Aurelian . . . was completely beggared by it.'

Governor-General and Nawab of Oudh rode together in one howdah, while 'His Lordship, in the true style of Eastern pomp, distributed his rupees with a liberal hand'.

Day followed day, with the Nawab haunting the Lord. He 'declared that he could not exist unless he always dined and breakfasted in company with the Lord'. Night followed night, full of fireworks and illuminations 'the most splendid I could ever have conceived an idea of'. Metcalfe, 'constantly annoyed with ceremony', grew weary, and returned to Cawnpore, to

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

spend a fortnight with his aunt, Mrs. Richardson, whose husband was a civil servant.

He was now keeping two journals, one a diary and the other a record of his thoughts. His palanquin exchanged for an elephant, he left Cawnpore, February 26, and moved towards Ujjain at leisure and circuitously, through a landscape strewn with the world's most majestic tombs and mosques, 'heaps of ruins, lamenting in forcible language the oppressive ravages of time'. General officers and great officials showed him a kindness of hospitality which it is clear his own character called out in part. But he preserved his isolation. On March 7, he read the morning service alone, reminding himself of what he remarks that his countrymen rarely knew, that the day was Sunday. 'It appears to me necessary to religion to bring it to one's serious attention at fixed periods. For the want of this, the English in India have less virtue in them than elsewhere, and cannot impress the natives with a good idea of our religion.' Encamped near a sepoy battalion, he took no pains to see their officers, 'for reasons peculiar, I believe, to my own disposition', adding, with illogical chagrin, 'It seems equally strange that no one here should have thought me worthy of notice.'

India had not yet claimed him; she never did claim him. His skies changed, but not his mind. On March 12, 'I took up my quarters in the Taj Mahal', which was in use as a Maratha guest-house. He admitted it was 'above description'. Yet it left 'no impression upon my mind'; he was as proof against it as Mr. Aldous Huxley.

'I was not inspired with any of those sentiments of awe, delight, or reverence with which I have viewed much less magnificent buildings, particularly the colleges of the universities, or with which I have heard the echo of my own footsteps even in the cloisters of my much-loved Eton.'

He had left Fort William College with applause; and on March 15, 1802, this extraordinary young man wrote to his friend Sherer in Calcutta, to instruct him to settle a pension of

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

twenty rupees a month for life, dating from the beginning of this year, on the *munshi* who had taught him for the few months of his study. 'He is the only native of India for whom I entertain any particular esteem, which his merits loudly demand. It is no fault of his that I am not at this moment a tolerant proficient in some one or other of the Oriental languages.' It is a very remarkable man who at seventeen begins to pension those who have given him knowledge.

He now entered the wildly beautiful ravines and hills of Central India. He travelled alone, rising early and reading hard, in English, Latin, French, as his elephant swung him along. He was eating and sleeping soundly, for the first time since reaching the country. The weather growing grim, he journeyed much by moonlight, rejoicing in the fairy appearance of the landscape, and the spacious banyan-groves in which he spent the hotter hours.

Officially there was an Anglo-Maratha alliance, continuing out of the late war with Tipu. Metcalfe came across Sindhia's troops under their French (in some cases, British) officers. He noted with interest that they carried the same arms and wore the same uniform as the Company's sepoy did, and marched perfectly to European tunes. Bandits tried to pillage his luggage; they were driven off. Presently he reached the Rajput state of Kotah, whose Dewan ceremonially visited him and to his 'great annoyance' kept the presents Metcalfe offered him—a gold watch, a brace of pistols, scissors, a penknife, and a Hindavi manuscript 'curiously minute'. This 'I had never intended', and it 'is not a very general practice'. The articles represented a considerable drain on the resources of a boy setting out to his first appointment. Metcalfe returned the visit (acquiring thereby some shawls and cloths), passing through streets 'lined with inhabitants as if to view some strange spectacle. I could not help reflecting with what indifference I should be suffered to pass into a town in England, and yet how much happier I should be.'

From Kotah he entered the parched region round Jaipur—

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

'the most savage, bleak, dreary desert I ever had any idea of—one vast rocky plain or plain rock'. The wind blew as if through a furnace, and made it impossible to use an umbrella (the resource of Europeans, as well as Indians, in the pre-*tupi* era), 'so that I was exposed on my elephant to the burning rays of the sun, the reflection from the rock, and the scorching influence of the wind; all these circumstances rendered me unwell during the day and night'. Finally, on April 16, he reached Ujjain, joined Collins, and entered on the most painful experience of his life.

'Jack Collins', from association with whom Metcalfe's parents expected such advantages for their son, was now 'King Collins', with thirty years of India and unquestioned power behind him. 'A noble suite of tents', which 'might have served for the Great Mogul', housed his servants and zenana, and a private artillery brigade with native gunners fired salutes for his guests. First glimpses (they were deceptive) showed 'an insignificant, little, old-looking man, dressed in an old-fashioned military coat, white breeches, sky-blue silk stockings, and large glaring buckles to his shoes, having his highly powdered wig, from which depended a pig-tail of no ordinary dimensions, surmounted by a small round black silk hat, ornamented with a single black ostrich feather, looking altogether not unlike a monkey dressed up for Bartholomew fair. There was, however, a fire in his small black eye, shooting out from beneath a large, shaggy, pent-house brow, which more than counterbalanced the ridicule that his first appearance naturally excited'.<sup>1</sup>

After the trouble had passed—except for the lasting bitterness which never left the younger man—Metcalfe wrote thoughtfully in his commonplace book, under the head 'Argue':

'To differ in opinion from men of greater age and experience is looked upon, in a young man, as a great presumption. Yet are boys at school and college taught and compelled to criticise the best and most celebrated authors that the world has known, and to argue on all subjects even in favour of an untenable proposi-

<sup>1</sup>Blakiston, J., *Twelve Years' Military Adventures*, i, 144.

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

tion.' He had forgotten what he had written, while at Eton, that he had learnt: 'to keep a padlock on my mouth.' He would have been wise to have temporarily suppressed his extensive reading and self-communing on deep matters, and have listened with outward respectfulness, even while Jupiter was thundering out opinions which everyone else knew were grotesque.

He now received his parents' replies to his miserable letters of entreaty. His father's was kind enough, and had plenty of worldly wisdom in it:

'If I had considered my own inclination, I should never have allowed your brother or you to leave this country. In the vale of life, the company of two sons, of whose abilities and acquirements any father might be proud, would have been a solace that a selfish mind would readily embrace; but, looking forward to the period when I must pay the debt of Nature, it became an indisputable duty to give up personal enjoyment for their future welfare, and to consider how to place them in the most advantageous situations. Judge then, my dear Charles, what I experienced at finding you so dissatisfied with your station in the Civil Service, after so short a trial. Let me ask you in what line of life I could have placed you that could hold out any prospect of a direct support, much less of a future independence? The army and navy you always objected to; and with respect to your present idea of a clerkship in the Secretary of State's office, if I could have obtained such an appointment, the situation is neither so pleasant nor so profitable as a clerk in a merchant's office—a place which you would soon discover to be too degrading for any son of your father's.'

He concludes with bluff good humour, complacently drawing attention to his own example, as one which every young man should try to emulate:

'That the prospect in Bengal always appears unpromising on first entering into the service is a fact I have innumerable instances to prove; and many men now in England with large fortunes, and several in Bengal in good circumstances, held the same



## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

language as you do now. I remember well my own feelings when I was an ensign, and had been in the country about three months. I one morning (in a fit of the bile) waited on the commanding officer with an intention to resign the service and return to England. Fortunately for me, the conversation at breakfast took a pleasant turn in which I bore an active part, and a hearty fit of laughter got the better of my *blue devils*. I returned to my quarters with a determination to persevere; and by that prudent resolution have reached the situation which I now hold. Let my example not be thought unworthy of being followed by my sons—and I shall look with anxiety for your next letter being written in better spirits than the one now before me.

‘God bless you, my dear Charles; let me hear from you by every opportunity.’

Metcalfe’s mother, however, had no patience with weakness. Probing his secret misery, she said grimly, ‘Instead of your parents being the objects of your wish to relinquish so important a situation, if you examine your heart you will find it is Miss D—.’ ‘Ride on horseback,’ she exhorted him. ‘When intense thinking is joined with the want of exercise, the consequences must be bad. . . . Your letters have given your father and myself little satisfaction. We did not expect such, and are, therefore, the more chagrined. . . .

‘If you have a grain of ambition, you are in the field for it, and the ball is at your foot. . . . What is it you want? With friends, money, attention, credit, good sense, abilities, and a prospect before you which hundreds, I may say thousands, in that country have not, you want, I fear, my dear Charles, a contented mind.’

She sent him a box of pills, since he was obviously bilious.<sup>1</sup>

England’s empire-builders have had Spartan mothers. Metcalfe dutifully repressed himself, and kept to himself all he most cared about. His sorrows were buried in his commonplace book, under the head ‘Attachments’:

‘The love of a boy of fifteen is a laughable subject; and is con-

<sup>1</sup>*The East India Military Calendar* (1823).

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

sidered too childish to be lasting. . . . She is far removed from any thoughts of obtaining her hand, and good sense and reason prohibit my aspiring to it. Her happiness is my first wish, in preference to my own; and whoever the happy man to whose arms she is consigned, may he prove worthy of the inestimable blessing!'

All through this summer and autumn his delighted father was sending ingratiating messages to his old friend Jack Collins. 'Tell Collins I saw his boys lately; they are going on extremely well, and as I intend giving the eldest my best nomination when he is of the proper age, you will have to take as much care of him as I am convinced his father will take of you!' 'Tell Collins his charming boys are returned to school.' 'Tell my friend Collins I saw his boys yesterday. They are all we can wish.' 'Give my unfeigned love to Collins.'

But long before these assurances could traverse the tedious seas and convey their belated comfort, Collins and his young Assistant had parted. Metcalfe's letters to Sherer breathe a passion of banked-down resentment such as he was to experience only once more in his life.

'I scarcely know what to say . . . I say from my soul what I believe to be true, yet I am aware that it is possible that I may see things with a jaundiced eye, for his conduct towards me has been such that I have not words to express my contempt of it. . . . Any general description of Collins will convey no idea of it; it is only from hearing particular anecdotes that you would be able to judge of his extraordinary character. To say the best of him, he is a man whom one ought immediately to quit.' (June 20, 1802.)

The details of their rupture we do not know. Kaye says justly: 'The story is an old one; within every man's experience; intelligible; without mystery.'<sup>1</sup> In India, more than anywhere, it is all this. In your own land you can—up to a point—select your friends; even in the circle of those with whom you are obliged to have daily business there is some field of choice. In India, in

<sup>1</sup>*Life of Metcalfe*, i, 84.

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

most men's experience, there is no choice, but only—as day follows day, and the years drag by—a compulsory intimacy among men whose souls and minds may be, and often are, hateful to each other. The misery is the greater when, as is common, one is new from home and the other long established in self-esteem, and by the subservience and sycophancy of those beneath him freed from misgivings as to his own infallibility. No words can then convey their mutual scorn and detestation. Five years later, when he heard of Collins's death Metcalfe set down (June 16, 1807) words that showed his undying anger:

'I felt a stronger spirit of resentment against him than I have ever felt towards any other man. He has reached that goal at which all enmities subside; mine are at an end. I sincerely forgive him for the wrong he did to me.'

The episode is completely explained if we remember also the violence which events had done to his mind and heart. When he had every right to expect to enjoy the immense opening of freedom that comes to a boy who has overpassed the first wretched stages of life at a great public school, the years of leisure and ripening had been snatched from him. He had become a junior again; and, moreover, a junior under a colonel who had long forgotten the way a young man's mind worked, and habitually expressed for all intellectual matters a contempt which was in no degree due to familiarity with them. Moreover, Metcalfe's one year in Calcutta, though deeply gratifying in what should doubtless have counted most, the Lord's attentions, in what comes closest to a young man's self-respect had been crowded with mortifying experiences. He had learnt that the ugly duckling excites no admiration until the time has come when admiration is a matter of indifference. He had undergone the wretchedness we feel when we realise (or imagine) that we have gone here and there and made ourselves a motley to the view, evoking in people we despise a contempt that we have to own has been not altogether unjustified.

'I have suffered one precious year of my life to pass away

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

without any adequate improvement. In the year 1801 I really acquired nothing, unless a smattering of an Oriental jargon be termed an acquisition. I suffered a very large library to be useless, whence I might have extracted that which would have been of much more service to me than running about to tiffins and noisy parties.'

King Collins let his Assistant go, and on September 10, 1802, Metcalfe was back in Calcutta. Whatever difficulty explanations may have presented, he had credit enough with the Lord to get over it, and on October 4 was at work again, less exaltedly but more happily, in the office of the Chief Secretary, Mr. George Barlow.

Collins let him go, not merely without reluctance but with some generosity. An obtuse man, as famed for psychological dullness as for arrogance, he never suspected the hatred with which the young man went. He dismissed Metcalfe's fury in the easy fashion that elders do, as a boy's silliness of hurt self-esteem, at which one day Charles would laugh heartily. He wrote him letters from time to time, that express both relief to be rid of him and a willingness to be friendly—at a distance. He is quite sure that Mr. Barlow has judged rightly in 'recommending your fixing in Calcutta'.

'Do you know, I by no means despair of drinking a bumper with your father—at some distant period, however—to the health of Charles Metcalfe, member of the Supreme Government in Bengal. Jestings apart, you have talents to justify the most sanguine hopes of your friends; and as you have come to the resolution of continuing in the service, I have no doubt of your application. . . . Be assured that I shall ever feel warmly interested in your success in life.'

Back in Calcutta, Metcalfe set himself to sort out his confused impressions and feelings. To his commonplace book he confided his reflections on Religion, Friendship, Self-Love ('a most consoling companion. Let every man search his own heart. I have a very good opinion of myself, and, as far as I remember, always

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

had the same. Self-love is the guide of all men's actions'). Sometimes he is almost a Tolstoi character, nervously asking himself the eternal questions. 'Do we suffer for the sins of others? For what were we created? When, and how, shall we be destroyed? The inquiry is endless. Guide me, O Lord, in the right way.' Sometimes he is merely tired, too tired to be his courageous and individual self.

'I cannot help thinking that too strict an enquiry into the truth of the Christian religion ought to be discouraged in very young persons. It is an inquiry which requires vast fortitude of mind, and which we ought to commence with perfect faith. Youth is very easily led astray by plausible arguments, and the system of natural religion is too pleasing not to engage a young imagination.'

In other entries common sense, which was never far away from this just and careful thinker, has the day to itself:

'It has often occurred to my mind, as a doubt which I have never been able to solve, how far active talents and a sedentary disposition are compatible. By active talents I do not mean that activity of the body which delights in the sports of the field and corporeal exercise, but that activity of the mind, that superior ability, which is formed for the rule of empires, is at all times ready for action, perceives instantly, and decides without hesitation. Were I to decide hypothetically, I should say that active talents were never accompanied by close application. There is a degree of drudgery, quiet, and I had almost said, inertness required in close application to a particular study which I think incompatible with a mind such as I have in view.'

His father's letters, if not particularly subtle, may have helped to heal his discontents, by reminding him both of his present reasons for encouragement and of future chances and changes. 'The Marquis's conduct to you has made a deep impression on my mind. I shall feel more devoted to him than to any other man who was ever in high station.' Lord Castlereagh, the new President of the Board of Commissioners, 'comes nearer to Mr. Pitt than any other person in public life. I stand well with him and the

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

Minister—an object of no other consequence than as it may furnish the opportunity of promoting the interests of my two sons.' Finally, before the year ended Major Metcalfe was enabled to send news more gratifying yet:

'The dignity of Baronet, which his Majesty has lately conferred upon me, was done in the most handsome way, and our reception at St. James's, when your mother was presented on coming to the title, was flattering in the highest degree. At my time of life the adding *Sir* to my name is of little importance, but to your mother, your sisters, and the whole family, I think the object desirable.'

Most helpful of all were Theophilus's contentment with his lot in China, and letters which showed that he understood and sympathised:

'I am sorry to find that India has not turned out so pleasant as you expected. But, my dear brother, it does not seem to be the profession you dislike, or the mode of making the money (which is my dislike to the country), but a regret at leaving England. Consider, Charles, it is not in the nature of things for us to be always with our family. Therefore, as you like your profession, and say £20,000 would not suffice for you, what place can you sooner realise that sum in than India?'<sup>1</sup>

Theophilus concludes, with a delicacy and kindness equal to his insight, by begging Charles not to go home unless health obliges him; but, if the climate does prove too much, 'return home immediately, and I promise you that, when it is in my power, your situation in England shall be made pleasant. If you cannot stay in this country, go home and make my dear friend Anne<sup>2</sup> my sister. I have another request to make, that you will place confidence in me, let me know your debts, your movements, everything—

*"Take courage, man, and me your sorrows tell,  
And safely think nane kens 'em but yoursel'."*

<sup>1</sup> Letter dated (at Canton) November 5, 1801.    <sup>2</sup> Evidently, 'Miss D.'

## THE LORD'S GOODNESS

He proved the reality of his affection, when he found Charles still miserable, by writing to their father, offering to be the common sacrifice for them both.

'The last letter from your brother', Major Metcalfe told Charles, 'was of the most pleasing nature. He feels perfectly satisfied with his situation, and with a degree of affectionate liberality which does him great honour desires me to let you come to England, and allow him to shift for himself. You, my dear boy, know my sentiments on this head.' He refused either to bring Charles home, or to think that he would not soon settle down.

Finally, the mind ministered to itself astringent medicine. 'Mind—little Mind—thou art envious—not so as to give me much trouble, but sufficient to convince me that thou art in want of reform; so set about it instantly, and learn to feel as much happiness at the good fortune of others as thou wouldst for thine own' (February 19, 1803). And good humour and ambition, incongruous yokefellows, completed the cure which introspection had begun. 'The features of the countenance', the commonplace book noted, under date April 25, 1803, 'are formed after those of the mind'—an opinion which the diarist annotated sardonically, August 9, 1803, 'Why, then, are mine so ugly?' At this time, too, having forced himself to accept the prospect of making his career in India, Charles Metcalfe resolved to be Governor-General one day, and made no bones about saying so—'and this not lightly and jestingly, but with all sincerity of meaning and gravity of manner.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Life of Metcalfe* (first edition), i, 78. Kaye gives this on the authority of Dr. Marshman, who often repeated the prophecy 'when Charles Metcalfe had reached the gaol' (says Kaye, with no doubt accidental cynicism) 'towards which he had long been steadily advancing.'

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

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'My good father is a strong instance of what may be done by ability and integrity. He is an example which I shall ever have before my eyes, and if I steadily pursue his footsteps I have little doubt that I shall raise the second branch of the family to the same honours.'—Charles Metcalfe, May 16, 1803.

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**T**he New Year began with an irruption from that tempestuous young hero, Theophilus. Sea-voyaging for health, he reached the Hugli, 'safe and perfectly recovered'; Charles received his letter, January 8, 1803. 'My God!' he cried to Sherer, 'he is the finest fellow in the world!' His studies were 'much interrupted this month by the arrival of my brother'.

Theophilus demanded parties, picnics, life. The Calcutta Etonians at once arranged a cricket match, in which Charles was condemned to play. Then Theophilus swept up country, to their aunt Mrs. Richardson, at Cawnpore; his ecstatic letters came streaming back by every dawd. 'A handsome countenance' (mused Charles, August 9, 1803) 'is a man's best recommendation at first acquaintance. . . . Are there not countenances which at first sight seize, as it were, upon our hearts, and establish an interest in the welfare of their possessors? The influence does not end with the first introduction; if tolerably good qualities are visible in a handsome man, his beauty will never fail to heighten and adorn them, and as it is his best friend in obtaining the countenance of society, it will be his steady supporter in securing its admiration. Instances without number occur to me of the truth of these observations, and in no place can they be more strongly marked than in the society of Calcutta. . . . Beauty, however, has its disadvantages. It secures so good a reception everywhere, that



## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

a man possessed of it is persuaded that he has nothing left to acquire. The ugly man, finding his face against him, is obliged to lay his claim to being agreeable on the solid foundations of good sense, knowledge and virtue. But if this emulation is not excited, the consequences are dreadful. A pretty fool may pass through the world pretty well, but an ugly fool is a most unfortunate wretch.'

But journal and commonplace book were dying out. In April, 1803, Charles had been taken into the circle of Lord Wellesley's personal secretaries. September brought 'an increase of official business'; and he took his last look at that life of social success which he reluctantly accepted as barred against him:

'Men who rise in the world are much more indebted to their good fortune than to their merit or ability; and he is the most clever who is best able to profit by good fortune when it comes to him.

'Among the favours of fortune may be considered a good face or figure, which, if a man knows how to take advantage of them, are not the least of her favours.'

Here his self-communings closed for ever, except for one final isolated entry, March 2, 1804: 'My eldest brother, Theophilus John, was yesterday married to a charming young woman, Miss Hannah Russell. His age is twenty. He will be twenty-one on the 19th of September next. May they enjoy every happiness which good hearts ought to enjoy!' Then Theophilus sailed out of the Hugli in triumph, dropping a garland for Charles. 'Indeed, had I been totally devoid of brotherly love, his kindness and attention to my dear girl would have gained him my warmest affection.'

Failure, complete and bitter, in the field where to a young spirit it was most painful, had its effect in knitting that spirit's resolution to command success in another field—and to command it so conspicuously that all must recognise it. In those weeks when his commonplace book was finishing, Charles Metcalfe had taken stock of his qualifications for success, and had found them adequate:

'I often, in moments of reflection, take myself to task for my

## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

self-sufficiency in fancying a superiority of knowledge and sense over the generality of mankind, and examine upon what claim this fancied superiority is founded. I have read and observed more, and have devoted more of my time to reflection, than, I may almost say, any man of my own age. Does not this give a claim to superiority? One would think so; and yet I am much staggered when I see men acquiring fame and consequence whom I do not conceive entitled to either. I know no right that I possess to fancy any superiority, and yet my mind will fancy it. It is, however, an opinion which I believe can only inspire good and honourable actions. . . . I am constantly reminded of this fancied superiority by the avowed opinions of others, and we are so willing to believe what others say in our favour, that I would without scruple resign my case to a just judge, and ask with confidence, "Have I sinned beyond the hope of grace?"' (July, 1803).

The most persistent and important of those who encouraged this 'fancied superiority' was the Governor-General himself. Destiny pointed to paramountcy, which Wellesley knit every energy to achieve, scorning the Company's solely mercantile outlook and making the subordinate presidencies—which had been so openly contemptuous of even the 'sultanlike' Warren Hastings—mere instruments of his will. He worked through an intimate confidential staff, preferably Etonians and if possible Etonians of families influential in the Company's Direction in London, young men whom he used as extensions of his own personality. Picked out for special immediacy of trust, they gave themselves up enthusiastically, repaying with worship their sense of election, and were swept up into his excitement and passion. No young men ever had such a start, and their careers, with hardly an exception, justified it. 'The glorious little man' strode to and fro among them: flung his orders about a Continent, to every corner where the Company possessed an envoy or a garrison: and dictated the movements of armies. His forces were gathering for a tempest, delaying only until his nod gave the hour to strike.

## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

Metcalfe and his fellows never forgot the intensity of joyful excitement, when the desired end was at last won. Day after day they had worshipped 'the glorious little man . . . girding himself for the approaching crisis'. The date of decision arrived, and his secretaries continued their work far into the night that succeeded a grilling August day. At last all was finished, and the Lord's special message came, 'to give full vent to their hilarity, to use his cellar as though it were their own, and not to think that they were bound to be quiet because they were in Government House'.<sup>1</sup> Having this particular permission to go mad, they did so, releasing a long-pent-up exhilaration, huzzaing victory to Lake and Arthur Wellesley, and death to treacherous Marathas and scheming Frenchmen.

War began, August 3, 1803. In the south, General Wellesley captured Ahmadnagar (August 11), and won the battle of Assaye (September 23); in the north, General Lake won the battles of Delhi (September 11) and Laswari (November 1), and captured Aligarh, Delhi and Agra. While Sindhia was hesitating, with an armistice half granted and half accepted, he was caught again—on one foot, as it were—and with his ally, the Bhonsla Raja (the Raja of Nagpur), sent reeling by Wellesley, at Argaon (November 28), a slaughter rather than a battle. There remained (apparently) only the haggings and evasions that forerun the conclusion of a peace. The Company had done well. The power and the glory were theirs, and legal correctitude as well. The Peshwa had been officially on their side, and as part of the loot of Delhi they had won the person of the Emperor, a blind old man. Sindhia could not deny that to both of these overlords he was—theoretically—in the status of their 'silly vassal'. No one took seriously Jeswant Rao Holkar, 'rebel', 'brigand' and 'illegitimate'. He could be seen to presently, and would doubtless be good enough to wait until his hunters were ready.

The war seemed over, and the time had come, the Secretariat said, to talk of many things, to draw up minutes and reports.

<sup>1</sup>*Life of Metcalfe*, i, 100.

## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

Young Mr. Metcalfe, reading prodigiously, had been consciously training himself for statesmanship—making notes as he read, of crises related by Gibbon and other historians. Question arose as to the stationing of the subsidiary force allotted to Sindhia as a result of his defeat. Metcalfe, having been through Central India, ventured to draw up a memorandum strongly recommending Kotah for a cantonment. The Lord was impressed; and his approval may have started Metcalfe on his lifelong habit of writing cogent close-textured *Minutes*. ‘This paper’ (Lord Wellesley pencilled it) ‘is highly creditable to Mr. Metcalfe’s character and talents. It may become very useful.’ He ordered copies to be sent to the Commander-in-Chief and Major Malcolm. Metcalfe’s salary became 800 rupees a month (more than £1,000 a year), March 17, 1804, and the payment was made retrospective to January 3.

The memorandum is a remarkable document, considering how slight had been the writer’s opportunities for learning about Kotah. A boy hardly turned nineteen can rarely have had so disciplined a power of extracting the utmost knowledge out of the passing situation. The phrasing, as always with Metcalfe, is admirable, with a salting of his own peculiarly intimate irony, as of a man making a private joke with himself. The Regent of Kotah, ‘although he has gained his power by usurpation, is very much respected by the northern chieftains, who think that his conduct might have been more villainous than it has been, and that therefore he has the merit of moderation’.

A very little of this, however, with Lord Wellesley might prove too much. Sensible of this, Metcalfe preserved a statesman-like gravity, except for an occasional flicker; and ended on an engagingly modest note:

‘In the concerns of a great empire, persons in the most subordinate situations may perhaps be allowed to form conjectures upon a local or particular subject, to the consideration of which they may have been led by opportunity or accident; but when that subject launches out into a question of systematic policy and

## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

general interest, the discussion of it can only belong to the wisdom of those who have the arduous task of watching over the welfare of the State.'

He therefore left it to the Governor-General to decide 'how far it is consistent with the dignity of the British Government to enter into negotiations with the usurper of a petty chiefship'.

Meanwhile Holkar, from the war which had terminated so ingloriously for his brethren, had formed certain conclusions. Sindhia would have done better had he fought in traditional Maratha fashion, a scurrying dust-cloud here, a dematerialisation into gnarled and craggy wood and mountain there. The British had sunk themselves deep in Central India, and if Generals Hot Weather and Rain would help they might find extrication painful. Holkar noted, too, that neither Sindhia nor the Berar Raja was enjoying the process of peace-making. Both held that they were the victims of hard, if not sharp, practice; Sindhia, in particular, was firm that he would never have consented to cease hostilities except on the understanding that he should keep Gwalior. Possibly, too, Holkar (who had an intelligence service unusually good for a Native Prince) had heard of the Governor-General's difficulties with the Directors. Finally, to a great extent he could not help himself in what he was doing. The disbanded troopers of Sindhia and the Bhonsla Raja had flocked to him, and both for them and his own horsemen he was compelled to move up and down pillaging for subsistence, and driving General Lake to exasperation. 'This devil', 'this reptile', Lake lamented loudly, was marring the rest which the victors had earned—'doing every manner of mischief', yet just keeping 'within the letter of the law'. Holkar beyond question enjoyed his own skill in skating so close to the edges of the diplomatic ice.

At length, he skated beyond them, when he not only menaced Jaipur, whose Raja had become the Company's dependent, but drew into active alliance another adherent of theirs, the Raja of Bharatpur; and, on April 16, 1804, Lake was authorised to make war. Holkar immediately detached Amir Khan, a Pathan adven-

## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

turer who acted as his second self, to make a diversion in Bundelkhand, where he cut up some isolated groups of sepoys. Holkar himself simply vanished, falling back through Central India. In the appalling heats of summer Colonel Monson<sup>1</sup> marched south to reassure the frightened Rajputs. The monsoon broke, and he lost all sense of direction and situation, bewildered and nervous of the unknown that was watching him—besetting him behind and before, hidden in that land of crag-battlemented hills, on which storms were raging, and of rivers swelling far outside their boundaries. He recoiled, defeated before he had fought a skirmish, and out of the mirage and mists Holkar loomed up immediately. Monson had to fight incessantly, and reached Agra, August 31, his guns and army lost. Lake hurriedly left his headquarters at Cawnpore, September 3, and drew in all the Company's scattered forces in Northern India, to a defensive head at Agra.

Charles Metcalfe, appointed as Lake's Political Assistant, left Calcutta, August 23. His salary of Rs.800 a month was augmented by deputation allowance of twelve rupees a day, and he was now drawing well over £1,500 a year. A letter overtook him, from the Governor-General's Military Secretary, Captain J. Armstrong:

'Lord Wellesley, having heard this morning of your departure by dawk, directed me to write a letter to Lieutenant-Colonel Lake, and to send it by express, lest you should arrive without an introduction.

'I have great satisfaction in informing you that . . . I never saw so strong and handsome a letter in my life, both as to your public and private character, and his Lordship's personal regards for you. . . .

'I wish you a pleasant campaign, and every success you can wish for.'

The days of pleasant campaigning, however, had temporarily finished, and Metcalfe travelled through a country in very differ-

<sup>1</sup>Metcalfe's uncle by marriage.

## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

ent condition from the comparative quiet in which he had known it before Holkar's startling victory. Near Cawnpore, robbers surprised his bearers, who fled. Half asleep, he fought to save two personal relics—a seal given him by his father, and a tooth-pick case containing hair of every member of his family—and lost a finger and was wounded in head and breast. He staggered off, and lay in a semi-swoon beside a river; and while there reflected (such tricks does our mind play us) that his parents were then probably attending Abingdon Races. Will drove down the body's weakness, and he returned, to find the robbers had not quite finished ransacking his baggage. He waited until they had, when his palanquin-bearers also returned and took him on to Cawnpore, where Mrs. Richardson nursed him back to health. News of his misfortunes spread, and his godfather Mr. Rider wrote to congratulate him on his escape, and to bid him 'draw upon me at sight for four or five thousand rupees', to furnish himself to proceed.

So Metcalfe did not reach Lake's camp until October, when he found a poor welcome. Lake, proud of his philistinism, so far as he could eradicated literacy from those under his command. Everything was run on the foxhunting model; he was the M.F.H., scorning those lesser breeds whose souls are not poured out in the chase of little beasts or little peoples. Added to this, there was the constant friction of soldier and civilian. Here was this boy of nineteen, just because he happened to have got hold of Persian and had pleased the Governor-General—his father was a Director and M.P., and he had relations all over Northern India, most of them civilians like himself—sent to make treaties and to tell the Commander-in-Chief how he was to settle the lands he conquered. The fellow was a wretched rider, and could not hunt or shoot; in fact, quite ludicrously and notoriously did not want to hunt or shoot. He had turned up, to enjoy the picnic stage of campaigning, when the perils were past.

Metcalfe, as other men in his position have done, did the incorrect and only thing. The Raja of Bharatpur's fortress of Dig

**INDIA IN 1806**

Legend:

- British Territory (shaded)
- Native States (unshaded)
- Bassein Ports in British Possession are underlined

Scale of Miles: 100 50 0 100 200 300 400

Stanford, London.





## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

was stormed just after midnight of Christmas Eve, and the young political accompanied the action, to the delight of the Commander-in-Chief, who wrote to Lord Wellesley:

‘Before I conclude this despatch, I cannot help mentioning the spirited conduct of Mr. Metcalfe, a civil servant, who volunteered his services with the storming party, and, as I am informed, was one of the first in the breach.’

This was read by Metcalfe’s associates in their Calcutta office, and the echo of their ringing cheers reached ‘Charles Theophilus Metcalfe, Esq., Howe Boy’, in this gratifying communication, dated January 18, 1805:

‘Sir, 1. By the despatches of his Excellency the Commander-in-Chief we have been made acquainted with the glorious success of the British arms in the assault of the outworks of Deeg, and in the subsequent capture of that important fortress.

‘2. His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief having been pleased to testify his high approbation of your conduct on this occasion, we consider it to be an act of indispensable justice to record our decided and deliberate judgment that the ardent spirit of zeal, energy, valor and resolution manifested by you in the unsolicited offer of your personal services, and in the actual assault of the outworks of the fortress of Deeg, have been seldom equalled, and never excelled, by any of the youths in Lord Howe’s Establishment.

‘3. Your fortitude in refusing to submit to the imperious dictates of a haughty ambassador,<sup>1</sup> your invincible resolution and consummate ability in opposing the establishment of a vicious and immoral institution,<sup>2</sup> and your ardent patriotism and honourable ambition in voluntarily exposing yourself to the dangers, hardships and privations of an active campaign, had commanded our approbation, and had enabled us to anticipate with a considerable degree of confidence the continued advancement of your character and the unrestrained augmentation of your renown.

<sup>1</sup>Colonel John Collins.

<sup>2</sup>A proposed pension fund for widows and orphans of the civil service. Metcalfe and Adam, both future acting governors-general and both Howe Boys, had conducted the agitation which quashed it.

## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

‘4. We have no hesitation in declaring that your conduct has fully answered the high expectations which we had formed of it, that you have acted in strict conformity to those sentiments and principles of public virtue which ought to regulate the conduct of all the individuals in our society, and that you have deserved well of your country and of the members of Lord Howe’s Establishment.

‘5. Under these circumstances, we have unanimously decided to testify our sense of your conduct by presenting you with a silver pen as a mark of our applause, esteem and approbation.

We are your affectionate friends. . . .’

What was more important, the Army took Metcalfe to its heart. There is no generosity like that of soldiers to the civilian who has wilfully shared their risks; for endurance of danger which to them is a matter of routine they will shower praise on him. Metcalfe was Lake’s ‘little stormer’, and his prowess clung to him like a nimbus. Years afterwards, when he was Member of Council or Acting Governor-General, at toasting-time of public banquets the scaling of Dig was bound to be recalled. In the India of these tempestuous days Calcutta was an unruffled haven, and its society as unmilitary as can be imagined; readers will remember the fame of ‘Waterloo Sedley’, Collector of Bogliwallah. Metcalfe’s renown equalled his; and he looked back always with some complacency to what had happened during that moonlit hour of Christmas pre-dawning. ‘I would always wish to deal with military men,’ he told Malcolm, in 1820. ‘I was born in the Bengal Army. Most of my friends are in it and I have, from circumstances, associated more with military than with civil officers since I came to India . . . though I am “a damned civilian”, as poor old Lord Lake used to call us.’

Rumour spread through the circles of aunts and uncles, widening out till it reached his family in England. Lady Metcalfe then told him frankly what she thought about it all. His abilities, she at last admitted, were ‘of a very uncommon kind’. His conduct had been ‘regulated by a fine judgment (except in the storm-

## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

ing business—forgive me, but a mother can never reconcile that to herself'). Sir Alured Clarke, who when Commander-in-Chief in India had known Metcalfe, had shaken a finger at him. 'I hope you will scold your boy—scold him from me.' 'There is one thing strikes me' ('adds Mrs. Metcalfe, with her wonted penetration'<sup>1</sup>). 'You must have had some good and strong reasons to have gone out of your line. I hope it will not happen again; and that, should you have the military ardour upon you, Lord Lake will not permit you to throw yourself in the way of danger. One would think you imagined that your prospect of life was desperate, instead of its being one of the finest.' War was too dangerous for the son of a Director; there was plenty of cheap ordinary clay, fed and paid to be cannon fodder.

The Company were now winning victories. But the war was ruinous financially, and was to grow worse. The enemy made a concentration at Bharatpur, the capital of Holkar's ally, at which Lake carelessly flung his men across the flooded moat, January 9, 1805. They were repulsed. Three other failures followed, and his losses amounted to over 3,000, the shock to British prestige being felt throughout India. Metcalfe was a spectator, and never forgot the scene. It was he who made the decision by which Bharatpur fell, twenty years later.

Besieging Bharatpur, Lake was himself loosely but vexatiously besieged by Holkar and Amir Khan, hovering in the vicinity and cutting off stragglers and foraging parties. Amir Khan, who like his master had some gift of strategy, made an incursion into the Company's just-conquered lands along the Jumna, and in February, 1805, Lake was forced to detach a cavalry brigade after him. With it went that notable horseman, Charles Metcalfe. The riding, which was incessant, did him good, though he admitted afterwards that it had in no degree increased his pleasure in that exercise.

He enjoyed his work and importance, however. Not yet of age,

<sup>1</sup>*Life of Metcalfe*, i, 138. Kaye never reconciles himself to her change of title, but constantly calls her 'Mrs. Metcalfe'.

## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

he was in charge of all the business with the countless chiefs and barons of a vast tract of territory, which they traversed in pursuit of Amir Khan. General Smith, the military commander, had to use his ideas, and (what was more important) his Persian. He was on a plane of equality with far older men.

Amir Khan was brought to bay and broken: General Smith rejoined Lake, March 23. Holkar, however, teased Lake away from his siege, which had become casual and dispirited, and Lake took Metcalfe with him. Holkar now fast lost the prestige he had won. Night approaches and dawn surprises were new experiences for him, and they proved disintegrating. They were new for Metcalfe also; he told Sherer, April 2, 1805, of 'a close and galloping chase for many miles. We were mounted twelve hours, and went above forty miles. These *dours*<sup>1</sup> must have a fine effect, and will sicken the enemy very much. Without their occasional occurrence, camp would be dull.' He never wrote such letters again, so full of a normal human enjoyment of activity and excitement.

But he was warning Sherer to prepare to see him back in Calcutta. 'I shall not fail to *storm* your *quarters*', says the hero of Dig (May 30, 1805), with boyish pleasure in his recently acquired renown. 'The Commander-in-Chief's table is full of restraint, and never has society. So, to confess the truth, I am much bored. Some snug dinners with you, Bayley, Fagan and one or two others, would be delightful. I wish you financiers would find some money for *us* soldiers' (August 6, 1805). 'I will postpone a dish of politics until we meet. I shrink from them as from a serpent, for I have seen things in them which sicken me. I am amazed at the state of your finances, which are almost as bad as mine.' 'Our very noble and approved masters', the Directors in England, were showing a vexing zest for economy, and had already 'reduced to a despicable degree' the minor yet lucrative secretaryships, Sherer's among them. Metcalfe's post also was marked for destruction.

<sup>1</sup>Forays.

## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

Most of all, Metcalfe wanted to revisit Calcutta before Lord Wellesley left India. Owing everything to him, he returned an unstinted devotion which he never gave (or had reason to give) to any other chief. His days of hero-worship were practically (and prematurely) over. While they lasted, Lord Wellesley had won his heart.

'I have been so long used to look up to his lordship's approbation as the highest reward which I could receive, that in his departure I shall lose one great incitement to exertion. . . . If ever I perform any services which may deserve to be approved, I shall regret that Lord Wellesley is not here to approve them, for his approbation would be more precious to me than that of any other Governor-General ever can be. His lordship's favour first distinguished me, brought me out of the beaten track of the service, and placed me in situations from which prospects of future eminence and success opened upon me. . . . I shall carry with me through life the firm conviction of an endless obligation.'

Yet to Sherer he could express disappointment (June 11, 1805) at the apparent flagging of the will and energy he admired so intensely. 'It is with regret that I have perceived the last six months of Lord Wellesley's administration marked by an indecision and weakness (caused, I imagine, by his dread of people at home) unworthy of the rest of his wise and dignified government.' What was the use of moderation towards Marathas? 'They know no such thing themselves.' 'Shall we, Sherer, sue for peace, when a Mahratta, in violation of all treaty, insults our Government, and in every act and word hurls at us a thundering menace of war?' This was a reference to Sindhia, whose dissatisfaction had for some time been passing beyond a gentlemanly mutter to close associates.

Metcalfe, however, to his astonishment discovered that differences of opinion had grown up between him and his friend. Sherer was in the Finance Department, and was aware (as was even Lord Wellesley) that the treasury was worse than empty, was burdened with heavy debt. Sir Theophilus Metcalfe in

## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

London might support the Governor-General's policy all he could. The awkward facts remained, that the Company was a commercial undertaking, expressly forbidden by Act of Parliament to engage in conquests, and that Charles Grant, Chairman of Directors, had a prejudice against slaughter, even if it were only slaughter of pagans. Grant, moreover, from his own service in the country (in days now rather distant) held the usual opinion of retired Anglo-Indians, that he was qualified to understand every Indian business till the crack of doom.

Wellesley went home, therefore, and crowned his kindness to Charles Metcalfe by inviting the latter's father to call on him, in early 1806, when he told of the son's success and widening reputation. Since Theophilus had settled down in China—Charles expressing his own surprise (April 6, 1805) 'that his ambition is satisfied within the limits of the Factor of Canton'—it was plain to all which Metcalfe was destined to carry the family name to distinction. The ugly duckling was one no longer, even to Lady Metcalfe.

Wellesley left Calcutta, August 20, 1805. His successor, Lord Cornwallis, reached it, July 30. A month later (August 31), Charles Metcalfe, while willing to admit that it was 'very probable that I look upon things in the wrong light', was telling Sherer that, 'as far as I have been able to see, all the acts of Lord Cornwallis since his arrival have been deficient in wisdom'; it was likely to prove 'a great misfortune' that 'a man of experience and knowledge' had been selected. 'A man of judgment, who had *not* before been in India, would certainly have applied for information to those persons who might be supposed the most capable of giving it.'

In this category Metcalfe did not include the financial officers who had to find, from a land impoverished by mighty campaigns, money in unending profusion. For the first twenty years of his career he was the fiercest of expansionists. A quarter of a century later, when second in command to Lord William Bentinck, he repressed rigorously all proposals to extend territory and shrank

## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

from the thought of debt as from sin.<sup>1</sup> No one was a more cautious guardian of public resources.

Lord Cornwallis came to India only to die (October 5, 1805); and the senior Member of Council, Sir George Barlow, continued the policy of retraction (which Metcalfe had assumed that he disliked) with what few would now deny was an unnecessary thoroughness. The policy of abandonment of even allies—notably the Rajas of Jaipur and Bundi, who had helped the Company in its worst distresses, in the time of Monson's failure and Holkar's triumph—which had begun in Wellesley's last months, became a mere scuttle into peace and financial economy. Metcalfe rightly stigmatised certain betrayals as 'a positive breach of faith'. Part of the settlement soon had to be undone, and Minto, less than half a dozen years later, had to advance again over much of the ground which had been yielded. In that advance Metcalfe, as it fell out, was his chosen agent; and the settlement's unravelling, from first to last, was his work.

It was in these final months of campaigning against Holkar that Metcalfe's destiny turned definitely away from the paths of ordinary administration and secretarial service. In June, 1805, John Malcolm, the name of all names in the Indian political field, arrived in Lake's camp. He at once sought out Metcalfe, eager to draw him into comradeship, and 'in a full, friendly, and flattering manner' asked what were his ambitions.

'He laid open to me the various plans which were in contemplation, gave me admission to all his papers, and by appearing to interest himself in my welfare, prepared me to listen to him with great attention. He expatiated on the great field of political employment now open in Hindostan, the necessity of many appointments and missions, the superiority, as he seems to think, of my claims, and the great risk, if not certain injury, of my quitting the scene of action. By holding out the offer of Distinction, he gained the important outwork of Desire, and the citadel of Resolve was in danger of falling.'

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS., especially letters dated March 17 and 27, 1831.



## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

Metcalfe's main hesitation, deeply honourable to himself, was because, if he stayed up-country, he could not pay his last respects to Lord Wellesley. 'I long to see our glorious Wellesley before he quits us.' But the more he looked at the idea of political service the more it held him. He had had 'the misfortune of being under men whose talents, knowledge and character, or rather want of these, I could not admire; who gave no encouragement to my desire to learn, who on the contrary rather made me sick of my pursuit of knowledge. I have felt myself degraded by my situation, and instead of studying acquaintance with the natives I have shrunk from notice as much as possible. My knowledge, therefore, is only that which I acquired in the Governor-General's office.'

His delight at the prospect of remaining with Malcolm, as that generous spirit's colleague (in a collaboration which, he could see already, would be very different from that which had been his with Colonel Collins or General Lake), was most of all because of the thought of intellectual pleasures shared and encouraged:

'I rest my chief consolation on Malcolm's character, and the useful knowledge that I shall obtain whilst with him. It is my intention to cultivate his intimacy zealously—his advances to me have been very flattering. I foresee one thing; he is a likely man to give my mind a turn towards literary pursuits, which have scarcely ever entered my imagination.<sup>1</sup> Nay, he already has; he himself is an enthusiast.'<sup>2</sup>

Metcalfe therefore wrote to Lord Wellesley's private secretary his farewell letter, and, as Malcolm wished, put the onus of his remaining in the field on the Governor-General's advice. Malcolm 'tells me that I cannot better show my gratitude to Lord Wellesley than by assisting in scenes in which he will ever feel an interest. . . . The expression of a wish for me to remain, on the part of an officer in Colonel Malcolm's situation, I con-

<sup>1</sup>Presumably he means since joining the army.

<sup>2</sup>Letter to Sherer, June 11, 1805.

## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

sider to be a public call. . . . I have no favor to ask from his Lordship; the cup of his kindness has been already filled beyond my deserts.'

Major Shaw answered that Metcalfe's action was entirely approved; and added a private longing that 'your father could bite his brethren in Leadenhall-street', when 'all would be well with respect to the future safety of this country'. 'Pray remember me', said a postscript, 'to Cole, who will always do credit to Lord Howe's Boys.' Cole was the Howe Boy who put Malcolm on to Metcalfe.

In later days, Metcalfe's opinion of Malcolm was aloofly critical. But the glow never quite faded from either's memories of their first meeting. Long afterwards, when both were equally famous, Malcolm recalled to the younger man their mutual excitement, as they strode to and fro before his tent, planning the reconstruction of an ancient land, and the subjugation and building up of nations.

Metcalfe, having made his choice, wrote at once and asked Sherer to send up to him, as his private *munshi*, the Fort William College teacher to whom he chiefly attributed his first progress in Persian. Sherer was empowered to offer anything between the sixty rupees *per mensem* which Hafiz-ud-Din now received and a hundred rupees, and also travelling allowance. 'He will require some handsome inducement to quit his situation in the College.' Hafiz came, and stayed with Metcalfe until 1818. He was then reputed to have used his uniquely central position to amass a fortune through his master's carelessness.

Lake exercised discretion in carrying out Barlow's orders, and Holkar, haggling over terms, was warned that the British meant to move immediately on his camp. He gave way, and Metcalfe was sent to conclude peace, which was done, January 7, 1806.

To Lake, Metcalfe wrote a characteristically succinct and exactly phrased formal account, and to Sherer an equally characteristic longer account, extraordinarily vivid. The enemy were so utterly weary of war that his approach was greeted with a

## THE RISING YOUNG POLITICAL

salute of fifty guns and the most genuine enthusiasm. 'The crowds . . . which thronged the way on our procession to the visit, and our return, testified, in the most lively manner, unbounded joy.'<sup>1</sup> Holkar promised to break up camp and begin his march back to the territory which was now officially recognised as his, on the 13th—a promise which, to Metcalfe's astonishment, he afterwards kept.

'*Ek-chusm-oo-doula's*<sup>2</sup> appearance is very grave, his countenance expressive, his manners and conversation easy. He had not at all the appearance of the savage that we know him to be. . . . A little lap-dog was on his musnud—a strange playfellow for Holkar! The jewels on his neck were invaluablely rich.'<sup>3</sup>

The Envoy was 'highly gratified to observe the extraordinary joy which was visible in the countenance and conduct of the chiefs and the whole Durbar'. There was, however, one apparent exception, 'a blackguard in his looks' who 'affected to be particularly fierce, by rubbing his coat over with gunpowder, and assuming in every way the air of a common soldier'. It was Amir Khan, disappointed that the proposals contained no special provision for himself—showing off, and using the opportunity for the particular kind of elvish humour that he and his master revelled in. It was wasted on the serious young ambassador:

'I consider his behaviour to have been affectation. He had the impudence to ask from me my name, which must have been known to him; and his conduct was so evidently designed to bring himself into notice,' that Metcalfe found 'gratification' in elaborately snubbing him, answering his question plainly, and turning away to continue 'a good-humoured conversation with Holkar'. It gave him pleasure to remember this, when he learnt who it was that he had set in his place; 'for he had . . . behaved with egregious impertinence'.

<sup>1</sup>Report to Lord Lake, January 10, 1806.

<sup>2</sup>'The One-Eyed'. Holkar had lost an eye.

<sup>3</sup>Letter to Sherer, January 26, 1806.

## CHAPTER V

### THE STATESMAN IN MAKING

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'Without entering here into the question how far the Company may have benefited by becoming a potentate, and granting, without discussion, the full justice of all the lamentations which are uttered on this subject by many worthy directors and proprietors, I must be allowed to say that it cannot now be helped—the evil is done. Sovereigns you are, and as such must act.'—Metcalf in 1806.

'To tell the truth, I think all stirring times detestable, on one account, which is that pure virtue is useless in them.'—Metcalf to Mountstuart Elphinstone, 1804.

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Hoping for a return to Wellesley's expansionism, Metcalfe noted eagerly every least flickering up of intentions apparently 'reconcilable to Sir G. B.'s former conduct'. He had not yet learnt that Barlow possessed no personal opinions. The habit of a lifetime was obedience. If Wellesley were over him and urged a vigorous running ahead, he ran ahead. If the Directors enjoined a halt, he halted. His mind was in blinkers. All the same, it was an honest mind. Regarding himself as a servant, Barlow considered he had no rights except a servant's, of unquestioning co-operation, and this was the answer he made to remonstrances from Lake. Moreover, debt clogged the wheels of the military machine, and the Company had lost even its power of obtaining credit.

Metcalf's *Minutes*, which from now on we must closely study, are the mirror of a mind bent always on the finding of essential truth, by exclusion of the personal and accidental. They are excellent reading, with only one flaw, that they are written on themes in which his countrymen have consistently refused to interest themselves.

## THE STATESMAN IN MAKING

His letters also, almost from the first, are often practically *Minutes*, so precisely and consecutively are their statements put down. His mind was always in training for the high position to which he had dedicated himself. His thoughts are never caught in undress.

In a long letter to Sherer, December 18, 1805—six days before Lake's informal agreement to allow Holkar to slip peacefully back to Malwa—he interred his judgment of Lord Cornwallis, recently dead, but fiercely assailed his successor.

'Since my return to head-quarters, a great change has taken place in my sentiments, from the perusal of the Governor-General's despatches and instructions. There is a character pervading them which promises weakness and indecision, disgrace without recompense, treaties without security, the name of peace without tranquillity, and imaginary economy without saving . . . in a word, the speedy renewal of universal disturbance and extensive war. . . . I cannot enter into a minute discussion of these *horrible* designs.'

Yet already there is plainly an opening for argument to enter. 'I know that you think differently,' he tells his friend; and ends good-humouredly. 'On looking over my letter, I cannot help laughing at the positive and unsatisfactory manner in which I have given an opinion of the politics of our new Governor. In fact, whilst the measures which I hate are in agitation, I am anxious and warm; let them be once executed, and I shall resign myself with patience and silence.'

Even on the question of the retrenchments ordered by the Directors, he showed that readiness to modify his judgment, which is one of his finest traits. On December 15, 1805, the special personal secretariat which Lord Wellesley had established—a net of secrecy and service round himself—had been demobilised, in response to peremptory instructions. One of the 'degummed' was Metcalfe (who while absent with Lake had been technically present in Calcutta). His salary shrank accordingly, by four hundred rupees a month—to Rs.400 (added to deputa-

## THE STATESMAN IN MAKING

tion allowance of about the same amount). On January 26, 1806, he wrote intemperately: 'I think that you will agree with me in blaming the furious zeal for reduction which dismissed all members of the Governor-General's office . . . without any steps to make a recompense.' But by February 12 reflection had softened him: 'I think with you, that the principle laid down for the retrenchments is good. As for individual feelings, they must suffer.'

Sherer saw and understood the necessities of the Supreme Government; and his differences with Metcalfe were frank and unresented, and his arguments repeatedly influenced the latter. Metcalfe stuck to one point, however. 'I think that the parsimony of the Government is too ostentatious in its display. As real, and full as noble, an economy might be practised without such an universal publication of it.' This is a very small grumble, for one who had lost so much.

Metcalfe contented himself, therefore, by drawing up a private *Minute* for his father's instruction. It is a mixture of wisdom and immaturity, the former often startling in its quality of detached commentary. It contains a proportion of rhetoric quite unusual in his writing, as when he wastes one roaring page in noisy sarcasm over Sir George Barlow's choosing the Jumna as a boundary. 'What magic is it which shall make one bank of a stream the object of dread and aversion, when the other is everything desirable?' Nor is there much firm texture of solid reasoning in such elegiacs as these:

'Execrate the memories of Clive and Watson, and those who first brought you from the state of merchants. Burn them in effigy, hang their statues, and blast with infamy those malefactors. Your progress since has been inevitable, and necessary to your existence.'

There is a great deal more of this kind of thing.

On the other hand, his exaggeration of the peril from the Marathas, which to us is so clearly exaggeration, could not be visible to men who had just seen that peril, when apparently crushed in the persons of its two most prominent military lead-

## THE STATESMAN IN MAKING

ers, rise unexpectedly in the person of a third, to destroy one army in the Central Indian fastnesses, to hurl back another from the walls of Bharatpur, and finally to lead the Commander-in-Chief a chase across Hindusthan. The conclusion had left both combatants very weary; and to many the result *looked* to have been almost a drawn battle. Not to Metcalfe, indeed; but he had not, and could not have had, the least conception of how drained the Maratha nation now was, or that nothing remained before it except political decline—with one final despairing and disorganised partial uprising in 1818.

The *Minute*, though an *ex-parte* statement—Metcalfe for once being, not at the centre, but on a flung-out fringe of affairs—attains dignity by its ethical quality. The writer is angered (as he had already told Sherer)<sup>1</sup> by the deliberate sacrifice of large tracts of India to rapine and warfare:

‘The Governor-General . . . distinctly says that he contemplates in the discord of the native powers an additional source of strength; and, if I am not mistaken, some of his plans go directly, and *are designed* to foment discord among those states.’

He calls this policy ‘barbarous, unwarrantable, and monstrous’; ‘applied to our empire in India, it is extremely filthy’.

He felt disillusioned. The ends of the ages had come upon him—at twenty-one. These men who came to India in their early teens and did not revisit England for perhaps forty years had their *education* (as I have remarked) *in India*. Inevitably, their minds ultimately came to flower in a manner very different from the expectations of friends who had stayed at home. Yet some relish of their first rooting and earliest forcing continued. Metcalfe’s intellectual roots were in the eighteenth century. The middle of March, 1806, found him camped at Delhi (or, as he always called it, with a better approximation to the native pronunciation, Dihlee), and his meditations on its tombs are not unlike Hervey’s once-celebrated ones on those of England:

<sup>1</sup>Letter of December 18, 1805: ‘One shocking proposition is, that we shall derive security from the dissensions of our neighbours.’

## THE STATESMAN IN MAKING

'I have acquired habits of idleness and indifference. I am almost afraid I love wandering for its own sake, rather than for the knowledge which it might enable one to acquire. Works and ruins which would have made me mad with solitude formerly operate with much diminished effect now. . . . There is, however, something in this place to which the mind cannot be indifferent. The ruins of grandeur that extend for miles on every side fill it with serious reflection. The palaces crumbling into dust, every one of which could tell many tales of royal virtue or tyrannical crime, of desperate ambition or depraved indolence . . . the myriads of vast mausoleums, every one of which was intended to convey to futurity the deathless fame of its cold inhabitant, and all of which are passed by unknown and unnoticed . . . these things cannot be looked at with indifference.'

Then the letter deepens into yet closer loneliness, that loneliness which was to gather round him, as round no other figure of his period. All his riding after Amir Khan and Holkar had left him 'without a grain more of enterprise on horseback than I used to have, so I enter no more into those dashing amusements than formerly . . . as there is not a soul here whose pursuits are like mine, my want of vivacity is generally pitied'.

Between him and Malcolm, his immediate superior, now fell a reserve which the younger man never did anything to lessen. Malcolm, despite the unequalled variety and prestige of his employments, always remained under some stigma of inferiority, social rather than political. He came of undistinguished stock, without titles or directorates; and in this India, whose higher circles were becoming a close preserve of the semi-aristocracy, was a lonely sword. He was not a King's officer; and he rather 'threw himself about', he formed intimacies with natives, he knew Indian ways of thought better than a member of the ruling race ought to know them. Elphinstone's attitude, for example, was that Malcolm by sheer accident of ability would probably do good in any job he was engaged on, but would undoubtedly mar the achievement by want of dignity. Metcalfe felt a touch of



## THE STATESMAN IN MAKING

scorn, as for a man who talked too freely and openly. 'What I do is under Malcolm', he wrote, December 18, 1805, 'with whom I have always been on very good terms. I have not, however, any particular intimacy with him; and prefer to consider myself as distinct from his establishment.' There was some unfairness in this, seeing that Malcolm's frank kindness had been exercised to advise him when in risk of wavering into a mistaken course, and to bring him quickly on to a plane of such influence as Malcolm himself had reached only after unimportant years of toil and fighting.

In June, 1806, Metcalfe drifted down the Ganges, in desultory mood, back to the Secretariat, as one of Malcolm's party. He had tasted the joys of kingdom-making and kingdom-breaking, and did not mean to return to a desk, bad rider though he was. His father's letters expressed unbounded delight. By supporting Lord Wellesley, Sir Theophilus had lost the Company's deputy-chairmanship. He thought it well lost in such a cause. His son approved his actions, and by his own afforded him full compensation.

Metcalfe reached Calcutta in late July, and on August 15 was appointed 'First Assistant to the Resident in Delhi', on a salary of Rs.750 a month. This post he thought a poor one for a person of his distinction. He persuaded himself, however, to resignation—the world and its vanities were passing away, passing away, saith the Psalmist. He would do his duty, even if it were merely as second ruler of India's capital city and a district of twenty thousand square miles.

He took with him not only this slightly ridiculous magnanimity, but some soreness on a friend's account. Colonel David Ochterlony, one of the half-dozen British who have gone deepest into Indians' affection (he is still a legend, never likely to be eradicated), had saved Delhi from Holkar, by 'one of the greatest and most important actions that has been performed'.<sup>1</sup> But throughout life he was unlucky, as some men mysteriously are. Time after time, he rendered essential service. He was not 'a safe

<sup>1</sup>Metcalfe to Sherer, March 14, 1806.

man', however; and it is safe men whom authority likes to advance, keeping ability and initiative to do the actual cleaning up of troublesome or dangerous situations. Ochterlony, therefore, as soon as Holkar was away, was removed from Delhi, and Mr. Archibald Seton was appointed Resident in his place.

Seton himself was unhappy about the business. In a humble letter to Malcolm, referring to an official explanation of Ochterlony's supercession, designed to save self-respect, he opined that 'surely Government will not content itself with merely soothing the wounded feelings of a public officer of his great and acknowledged merits'—there *must* be some first-rate job in contemplation for him. And this modesty of Mr. Archibald Seton's—a modesty as effusive (but then, all he wrote was effusive, 'prolix, ample, Asiatic and endless'<sup>1</sup>—tortuous and twined and tangled, in clause after explanatory clause) as that of the Reverend Mr. Collins but entirely genuine—disarmed Metcalfe's resentment of Ochterlony's 'unrecompensed dismissal' by 'this unencouraging Government'.

Even before his appointment, Seton had looked longingly at the chance that Metcalfe might come to Delhi. 'We met but *once*', he told Malcolm. 'But it was *such* an "*Once*"! So interesting a meeting! . . . not to have known him would have "argued myself unknown". When, therefore, we met, I could not meet him as a stranger. Ever since, I have been one of his many enthusiastic admirers.' He added, with a sigh, such a phoenix would never consent to forsake the brightness of Calcutta, for service with an obscure person like himself.

Seton's life was entirely merged in his duties, from which he materialised only to write necessary letters and reports. 'He seldom comes either to breakfast or dinner. He rises before the day, and labours until the middle of the night. He does not move out; he takes no exercise, and apparently no food.' This excessive self-immolation vexed, while it amused, Metcalfe. 'The real duties of his situation do not require such toil.'

<sup>1</sup>King James I's characterisation of the Earl of Northampton's letters.

## THE STATESMAN IN MAKING

Worst of all, he would relinquish none of them to his Assistant. When that Assistant begged to be allowed to earn his salary, Mr. Seton looked up from his labours, and was hurt by the indelicacy—the indecency, almost—of what was proposed.

‘He says that he is shocked at the idea of degrading my &c., &c., &c., to such mean occupations, and that the assistance which he expects to derive from me is in the aid of my &c., &c., &c., on the great questions of politics. This is very fine and complimentary, and of course not displeasing, but, as I observed to him, how can that be degrading to the Assistant which is daily performed by the Resident? and what is the use of an Assistant, if he does not relieve the superior from some part of the drudgery and detail of official duties?’<sup>1</sup>

Metcalf did not think Seton’s administration particularly efficient, despite its zeal. ‘The collections are ridiculously trifling, and the districts in a sad and irremediable state of confusion.’ It looked as if he must himself go out to make a land settlement. ‘It is a funny duty for me to perform, who am entirely ignorant of such matters; but I must undertake it, and as I am completely under Seton’s orders, I am not so terrified as I should otherwise be. . . . God forbid that this business should end in leading me into the Revenue line! I must endeavor to prevent that.’

I have written of Seton, perhaps, as if he were a figure of derision. This would be unjust, if left without correction. It is true that his expansiveness, his deep-sunken idiosyncrasy, his lonely immersion in work and the secrets of his own personality, caused amusement. But he won respect in an exceptional degree. He had shrewdness and insight; and a spirit of such generosity, patience, tolerance had hardly yet been seen in India, though it was the age of Barry Close, Munro, Malcolm, Metcalfe. Never has England been served by another such group of men operating on this high ethical and intellectual level—Plato’s philosopher turned governor and (for almost the first, and perhaps the last, time in im-

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Sherer, October 25, 1806.

## THE STATESMAN IN MAKING

perial history) with success. Seton was in many ways in advance of them all.

He came to a Delhi which was, in Metcalfe's words, 'a den of robbers'.<sup>1</sup> The surrounding villages had 'quartered the capital out into shares', and 'each copartnership monopolised the plunder of its allotted portion'. It was a time when 'the Resident's authority was openly defied': 'when it was necessary to draw a force from another district, and employ a battalion of infantry with guns, and a squadron of cavalry, to establish the authority of government in the immediate vicinity; when the detachment was kept on the alert by bodies of armed villagers menacing the pickets, and when Sepoys who strayed were cut to pieces . . . when a company of infantry was necessary to attend the officer making the revenue settlement, and even that force was threatened with destruction, and taunted with the menace of having its muskets taken as playthings for the villagers' children; when to realise a single rupee of the settlement then concluded, purposely on the lightest terms, it was necessary to employ a battalion of infantry with guns; when to subdue a single unfortified village a force of five battalions, with cavalry and artillery, was decreed necessary, and when the villagers, instead of awaiting the assault, sallied forth against this force, and for an instant staggered the advancing columns by the briskness of their attack'.

This was the result of a century of disorder and continual ravage from the outside. 'We had to conciliate, and at the same time control, a considerable class of people more accustomed to command than to obey, and ready to wince under the slightest restraint.' Each successive influx of pillagers and conquerors had left its sediment, of Pathans, Rohillas, Marathas; and Archibald Seton was sent to fit these ingredients of turbulence into an administration. The first step he took, and it was one on which he

<sup>1</sup>For the city's condition, see Metcalfe's Report in 1815 (I.O.R., H.M. Series, 776). But part of this he embodied in his own defence against criticisms, addressed to W. Butterworth Bayley, after he had left Delhi; and it is from this paper that I have quoted here.

## THE STATESMAN IN MAKING

never went back, was to abolish capital punishment. This struck Metcalfe's imagination, and appealed to something deeply merciful within him. Though he laughed at Seton, he admitted that these years were his own formative years. Character impressed him, as even intellect did not.

Much of his and Seton's difficulty came from the extraordinary position of Shah Alam, 'the King'. When Lake captured the blind old Emperor, along with the Marathas' other possessions in Delhi, Lord Wellesley made a magnanimous provision for him. Shah Alam retained his title and theoretical sovereignty, and was given an income of £200,000 a year, styled 'tribute'. His pride was further conciliated by the concession of power to appoint (with the Resident's approval) the police and fiscal officers of the district, though these officers were to work without his interference.

The arrangement would once have passed without question. Clive, Hastings, Shore, had acquiesced in the abounding political dishonesty of the Indian scene, and had even found it full of comedy, that they should use the language of humility to men helpless in their hands. But a new realism was beginning; one reason why Ochterlony lost the Delhi Residency was his urgency that the Emperor must be pensioned off and not left in a position that might tempt him to intrigue. Barlow, however, rejected this, in consideration of 'the attention necessary to be paid to the feelings of his Majesty'; and Seton concurred, 'by a submission of manner and conduct, carried on in my opinion far beyond the respect and attention which can be either prescribed by forms, or dictated by a humane consideration for the fallen fortunes of a once illustrious family'.

Metcalfe admitted that the error was 'kindly', and gratefully acknowledged the older man's generosity to himself, which he felt the more because of his memories of King Collins. 'We have had our different opinions . . . and argued them, and finally adhered each to his own, without any interruption of harmony or diminution of confidence, and considering our relative positions

## THE STATESMAN IN MAKING

the merit of this rests entirely with him.' This did not change his conviction that the arrangement entailed peril: 'it raises (I have perceived the effect disclosing itself with gradual rapidity) ideas of imperial power and sway, which ought to be put to sleep for ever. As it is evident that we do not mean to restore imperial power to the King, we ought not to pursue a conduct calculated to make him aspire to it . . . let him see the mark beyond which our respect and obedience to the shadow of a King will not proceed.'

The chance of helping the dead past to its interment came in December, 1806, when the blind old Emperor died, and was succeeded by a person whom Ochterlony had summarised as 'imbecility personified . . . and in the highest degree avaricious and rapacious'. Seton, far from taking the opportunity to lop away some of the misleading ritual of pseudo-royalty, increased it, with an obsequiousness which 'has often', wrote Metcalfe, 'made me wonder, and at the same time almost made me mad, to see a most worthy excellent man blind to such gross absurdity, and a dupe to wild and romantic feelings'. While Seton was thus disporting himself, a quasi-religious riot broke out, of the 'cow-music' kind familiar to our own day. Metcalfe had to take charge. He first called out the Company's sepoy, and then invited 'the King' to exert his authority to quiet the mob. The King did nothing, so Metcalfe settled the trouble himself, with little fuss or bloodshed. Seton sang his praises, and the Chief Secretary directed the Resident 'to communicate to your First Assistant' the high approbation of the Governor-General-in-Council.

Friends were always looking after Metcalfe: and it was admitted in the highest circles, with an openness that must seem astonishing when we remember that he was only twenty-two, that he was entitled to expect always the most agreeable and honourable post available. In August, 1807, the Collector of Saharanpur had a month's leave of absence; someone had to supply for him, and there was only Metcalfe within call. 'You will be able to conceive', Metcalfe flared up to Sherer, 'that my disgust

## THE STATESMAN IN MAKING

and annoyance is not small in being sent on the insignificant duty of acting as Collector in the absence of Guthrie from his station. This . . . may be repeated whenever the convenience of sending me from Dihlee to act for any Collector in the vicinity may suggest itself to the wise head of an unaccommodating Secretary.'

That prospect was too terrible to envisage, and his friends got busy. The Chief Secretary, N. B. Edmonstone, at once admitted the enormity of what had been done; and Adam sent Metcalfe (September 17, 1807) this soothing report:

'I am sorry that I am not able to give you a positive promise that you will never at any future time be employed on deputation; but I think it extremely improbable that you will, after what I have said to Edmonstone on the subject, and the manner in which he has spoken to Dowdeswell. D. excused himself . . . on the ground of there being no other fit person whom they could employ on that duty within a very great distance, and he assured him that it should not occur again. Edmonstone himself is fully impressed with the impropriety as well as the unfairness of sending you to perform duties so foreign to your own profession and to your inclination.'

Lord Minto, the new Governor-General, who had succeeded Barlow (July, 1807), had been asking about the renowned Mr. Metcalfe, 'and I took the opportunity of telling him your objections to the temporary employment you were upon'. 'I should hope', concludes Adam, 'there is no danger of your being again made a collector.'

The main lines of Metcalfe's thought throughout life were laid now, and with characteristic obstinacy as the years passed he cut them deeper. When at last he attained to something like the *de facto* rulership of India, during Lord William Bentinck's prolonged peripatetic examinations of the peninsula as well as the north-west, three themes occur and recur, with all the emphasis of his downright manner. First, 'the King' must not be allowed to stray one inch beyond his treaty rights, and must be watched

## THE STATESMAN IN MAKING

continually, since continually seeking to thrust out claims to his ancient paramountcy. Secondly, the country's immemorial laws and customs of landownership have been grossly misunderstood and the people wronged and impoverished in consequence. Thirdly, the ceremonial of reception by the Supreme Power is rigidly fixed by convention, and no Prince must be allowed to evade any courtesy which implied subordination, or to ask any which set him out of his class. Everything was clear, in popular opinion, and there must be no encroachment *by either side*—no interference in internal affairs by the British, no derogation of homage by any chieftain.

Last of all, he, Charles Metcalfe, was inalienably a 'Political'. He would serve as Member of Council in Calcutta; but otherwise he was a Resident or a Governor.

His discontents were augmented by the news from Europe: 'France, Russia, Austria, Prussia, Germany, Holland, Spain, Portugal, Denmark, Italy, Turkey, all Europe, save little Sweden, combined against our country! We may truly call ourselves "*divisos orbe Britannos*" . . . There is something glorious in fighting against the world. I admire the spirited and dignified conduct of our Ministers . . . Hurrah for the tight little Island!'<sup>1</sup> 'Of mighty importance, to be sure, are the politics of Dihlee! What progress that infernal villain Buonaparte has made!'<sup>2</sup>

Throughout this disgruntled period Metcalfe unnecessarily assumed that Barlow (*'my friend Sir George'*) was his enemy. As a matter of fact, Barlow spoke of him with as much warmth as he did of anybody. Seton, his consistent well-wisher and incapable of jealousy, tried to cheer him, and urged him to do what a junior officer usually did, live with his chief. Half morosely, 'I declined it for a thousand reasons. The one that I used to him, which was a principal one, was, that I could never enjoy a moment's privacy at the Residency; which is as true as that you could not enjoy privacy seated in a chair in the middle of the

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Sherer, July 3, 1807.

<sup>2</sup>To Sherer, June 16.



## THE STATESMAN IN MAKING

Cossitollah.<sup>1</sup> Every part of one is no less thronged with natives than the other.'

Trusting to sanction and reimbursement afterwards, Metcalfe built himself a bungalow, thereby sinking himself, for the first and only time in his life, in debt. His 'finances' were 'quite ruined, exhausted beyond hope of any reasonable repair'; he saw 'nothing but debt, debt, debt, debt after debt, before me', unless there came 'some unlooked-for and surprising declaration of the Fates' in his favour.

There are few of us who can demand this. But Metcalfe was the exception.

<sup>1</sup>In Calcutta (Kasitola Street).

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

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'It was during these six memorable months that Metcalfe's reputation was made'—J. W. Kaye.

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Ranjit Singh captured Lahore, 1799. When Lake entered the Punjab in pursuit of Holkar he was not yet the country's unquestioned master and the British styled him 'sirdar' only. He and Lake made a loosely worded pact. When Lake retired he consolidated his hold.

The Company presently fixing the Jumna as their border, Ranjit considered the intervening territory open to him. In 1806, the Raja of Patiala, an inveterate squabbler, invited his intervention against the Raja of Nabha. Ranjit gave his services as arbitrator, and in payment collected his first considerable haul of treasure—eight lakhs of rupees, jewels, and a gun.

Guns and horses were Ranjit's passions. To obtain his celebrated mare Laili he was said to have spent 60 lakhs and 12,000 lives. As for artillery, 'The Rajah's attachment to guns', Metcalfe told his Government, 'and his opinion of their weight, are both so great, that he will never miss an opportunity of obtaining a gun. If he learns that there is a gun in any fort, he cannot rest until he has taken the fort to get at the gun, or until the gun has been given up to him to save the fort. He immediately dismounts the gun from the wall, and drags it after him, as an addition to his field train. He boasted to me once, that he had made the Rajah of Puttealah give him a fine gun, which the Rajah wished to rescue for 20,000 rupees.'

Presently Ranjit seized Ludhiana, which he bestowed on an uncle. Only preoccupation with his Afghan and Gurkha neigh-

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

hours prevented his grip on the country between the Jumna and Satlej from becoming complete. On the edges of this cockpit of north-west Hindusthan three nations—the British, Sikhs, and Gurkhas—were now, in Cunningham's expressive phrase, 'seeking an empire'. They flowed inward along the Himalayan foothills, as well as over the plain—feeling their way, as the tide feels it with wide-seeping fingers. Their vanguards were bound to be in contact soon.

The precipitating factor, as between the British and Ranjit Singh, was the Treaty of Tilsit, June, 1807. The Court of Directors took alarm; and imagined that Napoleon, now that he had Russia's friendship, would try to invade India. They instructed the Indian Government (September, 1807) to coax Persia and all intervening states into an alliance—against invasion only, not committing the Company to any share in other future contests. As the parties concerned were quick to point out when approached, it was a naïve proposal; they were to bear the brunt of the coming of a nation represented as exceedingly wicked and terrible, keeping its armies far from British territory—and to do all this for the sake of the *beaux yeux* of the Company. The Company, in fact, was striving pertinaciously to be allowed to occupy a position which some powers have wanted to occupy in recent years—to enjoy all the advantages of a collective system without its responsibilities, and to cultivate the garden of peace while lesser breeds kindly undertook the deplorable and untidy business of war.<sup>1</sup>

Before these directions reached them, the Indian Government had already taken action. Ranjit Singh, in the autumn of 1807, asked leave to visit British India, on pilgrimage to Hardwar. Metcalfe was deputed to wait on him, to 'lay the foundations of that intercourse and connection which the Government is anxious to establish by a representative at his Court' and to ask him to allow an embassy to pass through his territory to Kabul.

<sup>1</sup>For what follows, I have used mainly I.O.R., H.M.S., 511 (4), and 592-595.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

Ranjit, frightened by a rumour that the British meant to invade the Punjab in his absence, never went to Hardwar.

In March, 1808, the chiefs of Jind, Kaital, and Patiala repeated previous applications to be protected. Seton, as instructed, put them off with answers that were no answers, and they returned, to find Ranjit's agents waiting with soothing promises. Between the lion and wolf, they had to come to terms with one of the lordlier beasts, so their relations with Ranjit Singh became a little tighter, while kept as slack as they could be kept.

The Company now launched three elaborate embassies. Malcolm was sent to Persia, Elphinstone was told to prepare to go to Kabul, Metcalfe was ordered (June 20, 1808) to visit the Punjab.

Metcalfe's salary was to be Rs.2,000 a month. He was to arrange with Seton for money supplies and presents, escort, servants, and secretarial staff. The escort was to include a competent military surveyor, to examine the route and keep a journal, while careful of such precautions as 'the ignorance and suspicions' of the cis-Satlej chiefs should render expedient. General Hewett, the Commander-in-Chief, thought two such officers necessary—an engineer, as well as a survey officer, 'to view the country with a military eye'.<sup>1</sup> To any enquiries by the cis-Satlej chiefs, Metcalfe was to return 'general and Conciliatory answers', with assurances that their interests would not suffer by any arrangement which his Government made with the Raja of Lahore. Applications for protection he was to refer back to Seton; but he was to try to convince the applicants that his Government was deeply interested in their welfare (if in a somewhat dreamy and tenebrous fashion). And 'the Rajah of Lahore' was informed that 'a Gentleman of Rank' would move forward to call on him as swiftly as possible, without waiting for his reply, the British Government having resolved to save him the embarrassment of trying to find words to express his delight.

<sup>1</sup>Letter, June 22, 1808.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

Metcalf entered on a mission as perplexing and tangled as was ever laid on a man of twenty-three.<sup>1</sup> He had to pass through territories of chiefs whose political status was as yet doubtful. Here, too, his permission was by assumption, Seton being instructed to notify them simultaneously with the envoy's advance. He was to act with exceeding caution, for (as he was continually reminded) Orientals are a jealous untrustful race, and the cis-Satlej chiefs, in their double relationship to the Punjab and British India, were known to be troubled in their dark barbaric minds. Metcalf was to establish a dawkh between Delhi and Amritsar as he advanced, if one did not exist already. He was to correspond with Elphinstone and to do all he could for him: to give him the benefit of his experiences on the march, to send reliable native agents to Kabul and if possible set up secret relations with leading officers of the Amir. He was to throw out a network of spies; Government thought it might prove even possible for him not only to get in touch with Malcolm in Teheran, but to establish with the latter 'a safe Channel of Correspondence (at least in Cypher)', and he was given the key of Malcolm's cipher. He was to get information of all the countries between Persia and the Jumna, particularly of those between Persia and the Satlej—full geographical and topographical knowledge, data as to supplies and roads and political conditions. He was to find out everything about Ranjit Singh: his resources, the constitution of his Government, relations with other States, nature and details of his correspondence with Holkar and other chiefs of Hindusthan, and above all, the number, description and character of his troops. He was to send back the fullest confidential reports, both to Seton and the Secretary of the Secret and Political Department in Calcutta, and to attend to any suggestion which either gave him.

On reaching Ranjit's camp, he was not to hurry negotiations unless compelled by events—first ascertaining what his compul-

<sup>1</sup>A situation perhaps as delicate, difficult, and responsible as any public agent was ever placed in'—Edmonstone, December, 1808.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

sory host thought of his staying 'during an indefinite period of time'. He was given copies of confidential documents, which included a secret letter which 'Aga Nubbee<sup>1</sup> Khan', the Persian King's 'late Ambassador to this Government', had sent to the Company's Resident at Bushire, betraying the French demands and his master's disposition to accede to them.

The information which the Company had collected as to French designs amounted to a handful of mist. However, probability, as we know, is the guide of life. It is also that of governments; and this Government boldly surmised, 'It is consistent with the activity which distinguishes the Character of the French' to suppose that they had already sent emissaries to Kabul and Lahore. If Metcalfe found a French agent established at Lahore—or if Ranjit's attention had been drawn to events in Persia and 'the designs of the enemy'—or if a French army were known to be on the march towards Persia—then he was to open up his aims immediately. Otherwise, he was to choose his own season for negotiations whose 'object may in the mean time be represented to be the improvement of the good relations' set up by Lake in 1805. 'This ostensible object may perhaps derive additional countenance and support from a reference to the friendly tenor of a letter' written by Ranjit Singh to the Governor-General, in the preceding January, and of Minto's answer to it. Metcalfe could point out that 'the demonstrations of attachment' in Ranjit's letter had 'augmented the solicitude of this Government' to improve their mutual understanding, and that Ranjit's abandoning his project of going to Hardwar had suggested 'this still more distinguished demonstration of regard'. Seton in a letter informed Ranjit that the mission was 'a mark of distinction which the Governor-General is not in the habit of showing, and which will no doubt be highly gratifying to you'. Copies of Lake's 1805 treaty and of Ranjit's correspondence with the Government were given Metcalfe, for his guidance.

All this was childish, if expected to deceive. Yet both Metcalfe

<sup>1</sup>Nebi: 'Prophet'.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

and his Government complained bitterly throughout, that the Sikhs were a people crabbed with unreasonable suspicions, and their leader worst of all—in which sad judgment the Directors, though with less heat, concurred.

Ranjit's help was not to be 'altogether solicited as a concession', but to be shown as the only way of 'Securing his territories and independance<sup>1</sup> from the effects of that Spirit of insatiable ambition and unlimited encroachment and Violence' now animating the ruler of France. A British army would help when this evil person appeared; and, since Afghan help was wanted also, this army might have to march beyond the Indus, an eventuality to which Ranjit's consent was sought. It does not seem to have struck the Government that such a consent must seem to him like signing away his independence in advance. Metcalfe was to ask everything, and to give nothing unless compelled—and then as little as possible.

It was foreseen, however, that Ranjit might ask some return for a concession so sweeping. He might want an alliance for other wars. If he did, the Envoy must remember that the British Government had no truck with states that engaged in schemes of conquest, and made no treaties that might involve them in future conflicts. But perhaps what Ranjit would ask would be their neutrality between him and the cis-Satlej chiefs. Here the Government wavered, very loth to sacrifice the latter. They balanced expediency and self-respect, thinking aloud, and almost asking their young ambassador's opinion as to how much of the one should be paid to purchase the other. Acquiescence in Ranjit's wishes would not be a violation of political principles (for the Jumna had been announced as the British boundary). Contrariwise, *non-acquiescence* would be violation, 'for it would involve the protection of States unconnected with us by the obligations of defensive alliance'. Yet 'principles of prudence and in some degree those of public honor require that, excepting only in a

<sup>1</sup>So spelled always, and by everyone, from Governors-General downwards, in the first thirty years of the nineteenth century.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

case of peculiar emergency, we should withhold a declaration involving in its consequences the probable destruction of States which have sued to us for protection and the approximation of the evils of anarchy and devastation to the very frontier of our dominions'.

The Government therefore postponed determination of what 'sacrifices' (of the cis-Satlej Sikhs, that is) it 'may be expedient to make', until it became clear how far its own security 'may require a cordial union of its interests with those of Runjeet Sing'. In fine, if the French bogey looked like becoming a fact, and if Ranjit refused an alliance unless his claims were allowed, then—but only then—just as nice customs curtsy to great kings, so 'principles of prudence and public honour' might curtsy to convenience. This was why Metcalfe was to be merely expansively genial and general, in response to questionings by the cis-Satlej chiefs through whose lands he must pass.

He entered enthusiastically on his task, seeing in his instructions nothing amiss—not even in his orders to remain as long as possible, while making an inventory of his host's possessions and possibilities. His judgment changed later, however, for among the qualities which mark him out as exceptional is the critical detachment that enabled him to change his ideas in India, and even to pick up some new ones. His scalding *Minute* on Alexander Burnes's mission of espionage through Sind, in 1831, is a case in point.

Seton gave him two companies of native infantry and twenty troopers, under Captain Popham, Lieutenant Ferguson, and Ensign Blake ('a good practical surveyor'), and Metcalfe left Delhi, August 6, 1808. Leaving nothing to chance, he specially asked (July 14) what he should do if Ranjit while he was with him made one of his trans-Satlej raids. Was he to accompany him, on the principle of the friend who sticks closer than a brother? Or to prohibit the raid? Government returned a halting answer, but thought that on the whole Metcalfe should remain



## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

behind, as his presence might be construed by the cis-Satlej chiefs as British sanction of Ranjit's action.

The monsoon clogged his path, and put him to 'a circuitous route'. August 22, he reached Patiala, whose Raja went through his favourite gesture of handing over his citadel's keys, asking to receive them back as the British Government's gift. Refusing to commit his Government, Metcalfe kept to the strict tenor of his instructions. The keys, he observed courteously, could not be in better hands. He sent a secret agent to Kabul, and proceeded.

On September 9, having entered the Punjab, Metcalfe halted about five miles from Ranjit's camp. Next day, Ranjit's adopted brother, Fateh Singh, met him midway, with an escort of 2,000 cavalry, and allotted the mission a camp about three-quarters of a mile from the Raja's. Chairs or not chairs, that was the immediate question; and when Metcalfe, on the 12th, with his officers called formally on Ranjit, the latter out of compliment made a fair showing of these conveniences, partly borrowed from his visitors. Presents were exchanged, and Metcalfe received an elephant, a horse, a string of pearls, a *jagir* (estate), a robe of honour, cloths, shawls and other kickshaws. Elephants were the ordinary small coin of diplomacy, and an ambassador moved through India disbursing and collecting these majestic beasts.

The interview was a prolonged one, Ranjit's share in it being mostly stretches of eloquent silence, which he broke to observe what a splendid person Lord Lake was, and how regrettable his recent death. Also, when a chieftain remarked that the British Government was renowned for its good faith he concurred impressively. 'He knew well that the word of the British Government included everything.'

In the evening, Ranjit fired a salute, to signify that he considered the day one of rejoicing. Metcalfe, looking back over it more dispassionately, noted small omissions here and there, and in particular was disappointed that Ranjit had not called on him first. Still (he concluded) it had not been so bad, and might

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

easily have been worse. This first evening, we may be sure that the four British officers went over the day's hours, its minutes almost, in careful detail.

Metcalf's disappointment soon deepened into chagrin. 'Instead of Considering how he could best Shew his Sense of the mark of Friendship and Confidence manifested', or 'how he could most properly fulfill what is due to the Rank and dignity of the Great State by which the Envoy is sent', Ranjit (he reported) was apparently 'bent upon demonstrating his own greatness'. To check this improper spirit, Metcalfe was 'obliged to require attentions which ought to have been pressed upon me'. Worst of all, since Ranjit showed no haste to call back, but was holding innumerable councils over every aspect of the affair, Metcalfe had to *invite* him to visit him. He decided not to risk his chances of success, by making a storm over small points of etiquette. But he intimated that he was displeased.

The Envoy was quick to discover the political condition of the country. Before he left it he had intrigued with many of Ranjit's subordinates, including Fateh Singh, and had put his own Government's hands on the cords that could, if necessity arose, pull tight a wide net of conspiracy. And in this very first week he reported that there were malcontents who for their own ends would love to bring about a fight between their master and the British. It was not the cis-Satlej chiefs alone who dreaded the former; his own people 'groan under his usurped despotism', and both within and without his kingdom were those who must 'view with apprehension any approximation to a friendly intercourse' between him and the Company. Yet he thought that approximation likely. Ranjit's better sense (Metcalf had already discovered how close a texture of solid wisdom underlay the King of Lahore's seemingly capricious surface) would save him from ever being beguiled into actions adverse to his interests.

The mission passed into a state of unofficial siege, in an old river-bed, 'under high banks on which the Raja's guards were posted to watch us'. Once, heavy rains made it 'a running sheet

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

of water', evacuated in haste. Metcalfe could not get 'the smallest intelligence', for Ranjit strictly forbade his camp to communicate with him. One of his agents had been stopped, and a packet deftly opened and closed again before being returned. 'It would appear that I am regarded as a dangerous enemy to be guarded against, rather than as an Envoy from a friendly State charged with the most amicable duties.' Ranjit plainly wanted to get rid of him.

British historians content themselves with sharing Metcalfe's annoyance, and by stressing the falsity of the man with whom he was treating. Ranjit, however, had a case; and Metcalfe himself was fair-minded enough to put something of it to his own Government. The Raja's conduct, he pointed out, was partly justified by his ignorance of what was going to be asked. The previous year he had been visited by Captain Matthews, an expansive freelance on half-pay and travelling for mere amusement. He had suspected that Matthews was spying,<sup>1</sup> and he suspected that Metcalfe was doing the same. 'Taught to regard the British Government as his natural enemy and the obstacle to the extent of his conquests', he might fear that the Company planned a conspiracy or coalition against him. Metcalfe warned Edmonstone that he might have to quicken the pace of his negotiations, to forestall dismissal.

The day after this despondent letter, Ranjit paid his return visit (September 16), and some relief came. They chatted affably, mainly on military matters. Ranjit spoke slightly of the Maratha troops, and told how once the mere rumour of Lake's approach had caused Holkar to lead a precipitate flight, leaving his camp standing. It was 'pleasing' to note the impression this had made. When Ranjit asked to be shown Metcalfe's sepoy at drill, 'I was very glad of the Opportunity of affording him gratification'. Metcalfe finally handed over two

<sup>1</sup>As a matter of fact, Matthews *had*, as was expected of an officer travelling outside British India, sent back reports, though of nothing like the fullness and value of Metcalfe's.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

more gorgeously caparisoned elephants and dispensed the customary tokens to Ranjit's sirdars.

He was cheered by the way this visit had gone off, and his disillusionment was correspondingly severe, to receive next day a letter telling him that Ranjit was leaving, and wanted the Governor-General's business, whatever it was, settled at once.

'Although it is difficult to feel satiety from the interviews of friends whose hearts are united . . . yet affairs of State must be attended to. Consequently, I am about to march immediately for the settlement of certain districts. In my nation it is considered very auspicious to march on the first day of the moon. . . . Therefore be pleased to make the friendly communications on the part of the Right Honorable the Governor-General. . . . My anxiety cannot admit of longer expectation.'

This struck Metcalfe as 'an extraordinary instance of suspicion, hastiness and disrespect'. Reminding himself, however, that 'a disputatious Correspondence would be a bad introduction', he wrote a careful answer, and announced that he would call on the 18th. Ranjit, wavering, was glad of this excuse to renew conversations, but to preserve dignity changed the date of the meeting. 'In consequence of the season and state of my constitution, I have this day taken medicine. To-morrow, therefore, at three o'clock in the afternoon, bring pleasure to your friend's house.'<sup>1</sup>

Metcalfe brought pleasure accordingly, and Ranjit was very good-humoured, admitting that suspicions *had* existed. His note, he said, had been misunderstood; it was not polite dismissal. But he showed open disappointment at the vagueness of the Governor-General's letter, and was exceedingly anxious to hear his definite proposals. Metcalfe refused to be hustled, and insisted

<sup>1</sup>Metcalfe reported that he had learnt that Ranjit had actually taken medicine. In later days, when his body had become a sink of disease, the latter played with the idea of physic continually, but rarely took it, satisfying himself with giving it to his servants, and watching the effect. In 1808, he had not yet come to this poor opinion of doctors, but did occasionally try their prescriptions on himself, as well as on others.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

that all suspicions must first be laid to rest, before business began.

Other informal meetings (not with Ranjit) took place, and the Sikh sirdars brought Metcalfe to see that he really must say what his Government was after. Ranjit's actions in the immediate future would depend entirely on this. Metcalfe therefore arranged for a formal durbar next day, September 21; and to prepare Ranjit warned him through his sirdars that he brought tidings which would make the bravest flesh creep. 'He would hear matters of which he had hitherto had no conception, and in which the Interests of his State were deeply concerned.' Metcalfe added, with a spasm of native sense, that these matters, though blood-curdling, were not going to demand any sacrifice from the Sikhs. That was going to fall elsewhere, on the British Government.

Metcalfe's adumbrations seemed to have frightened the very elements. A tempest prevented the meeting at the time chosen. It took place on the 22nd instead; and now, at long last, Ranjit was told the whole heart-shaking news. 'I then mentioned that his Lordship had received authentic advices that the French were endeavouring to establish themselves in Persia'—that they meant to seize Kabul—and that the goblins will get *you* if you don't watch out'. His Lordship's 'first care was to give warning to the states which this intelligence concerned'; he had therefore sent Metcalfe to negotiate arrangements 'for the extirpation of the common enemy', and was sending another gentleman to Kabul ('who would in a short time, with the Rajah's permission, pass through this country'). These measures had all been taken 'in the purest spirit of friendship'.

The rabbit had been produced, and in full durbar, after portentous preamble. The Sikh sirdars, who had expected at least a tiger to emerge, were surer than ever that this mission was up to some deep undivulged mischief. For the moment, they hid astonishment, and all present threw up hands in 'admiration at the friendly conduct of the Right Honourable the Governor-

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

General in making this communication, and expressed without hesitation a ready concurrence in his Lordship's plans'.

Ranjit's next sentence, however, was an exhalation from the suspicious murk that served him for a mind. He asked gravely 'how far the British army would advance to meet the French, and what force would be sent?' To which Metcalfe, caught unprepared, made the finely British (but undiplomatic) answer that 'it was our practice to seek our enemy, and that no doubt the Government would send an army beyond Cabul . . . such a force would of course be sent as would be amply sufficient to destroy the foe'. Ranjit swiftly did some hard thinking; and asked if troops were ready to advance, and when the French might be expected. Metcalfe, halting and hesitant—receiving his first lesson in diplomacy on the grand scale—had to make the lame reply 'that the moment at which the enemy might be expected could not at present be ascertained—that it might be sooner or later—but that there was no doubt of the design, and that it behoved wise governments to be prepared to counteract it; and that our troops always are, and always will be, ready to advance'.

Having 'expressed in animated terms his desire to co-operate with the British arms', Ranjit whispered to a sirdar, who carried aside everyone except the Raja, Metcalfe and two others. Ranjit, killing time, chatted in a desultory fashion. He asked, What if the King of Kabul joined the French? Metcalfe said, Then he must be attacked; but he thought such foolishness unlikely, for 'the French invariably subjected and oppressed those who joined them, plundered and laid waste their country, and overthrew the Government'. 'In conformity to the instructions of the Supreme Government' he tried to frighten the Raja, 'and at the same time to give him confidence in our protection'.

Flashes of humour lit up the talk. They were both young;<sup>1</sup> and, though throughout this episode Metcalfe's attractive power of laughing at himself was in abeyance, there were moments

<sup>1</sup>According to Colonel Murray, Ranjit was twenty-seven. Some authorities make him five years older.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

when he and Ranjit must have looked at each other with a wrinkling up of the eyes. One such moment came when Ranjit asked how things were between the British and Holkar. Very friendly, Metcalfe assured him. Ranjit shook his head, and observed that Holkar was 'a pukka rascal'. Yes, Metcalfe agreed, that was what we used to call him when we were at war. But now 'we always spoke of him with the respect due to a friendly chief'.

Ranjit's councillors ended their deliberations, and informed Metcalfe that the Raja concurred in all he had said, but the matter was so important that it needed fuller discussion, after which he should know their decision—next morning.

Next morning, and mornings that followed, brought disappointment. Ranjit thought the whole mission a ramp, and the French invasion bogus. However, if the British really thought his friendship essential he might as well get a price for it. So he asked for a definite alliance, not an entente against one dim eventuality. Metcalfe—probably correctly—interpreted this request as inspired by a wish to strengthen his own position against disaffected dependents. He wanted also a free hand against Kabul, and Metcalfe was not sure how far Elphinstone might commit his Government in that quarter. Above all, Ranjit wanted the cis-Satlej chiefs acknowledged as under his suzerainty, and invited the Envoy to say what the Company's boundaries were. Lacking clear instructions, Metcalfe could say only that Ranjit had no right to ask this so early in the negotiations. Ranjit agreed to write his terms down for consideration.

As Metcalfe rose from sleep, September 25, from a messenger who invited him to accompany the Raja he learnt that Ranjit was going. He did not know what to do, but presently followed—for which his Government afterwards mildly censured him. Ranjit's manœuvre was temporarily successful, the cis-Satlej chiefs drawing from Metcalfe's presence the conclusion that they had been abandoned. Edmonstone, faced with the question which the Government had burked so long, vacillated. It was plain that to detach the cis-Satlej states from Ranjit, far from

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

making him a firm ally, would predispose him to join the French, when and if they came.

Meanwhile, Archibald Seton had been working on the problem, sending Calcutta a series of weighty letters, of the kind that it is customary to call statesmanlike. 'Everything that has lately occurred appears to me', Seton pointed out, 'to indicate an artful and systematic endeavour to ascertain our real intentions.' Ranjit was trying to see how far he could go with safety. Only 'firm conduct and vigorous preparation on our part', thought Seton, that master of these qualities, would divert him from his evil courses.<sup>1</sup> Government in reply acknowledged the zeal with which the Delhi Resident hurled himself into these illuminating disquisitions, and expressed a sense of their high value. This encouraged him to keep on writing letters, underlined as often and as heavily as Queen Victoria's.

Metcalfe, after another interview, had to report that Ranjit was 'indifferent to the proposed alliance against the French, as the danger is not near or perceptible to him'. What did trouble him was news of British mobilisation, and the prospect of a Resident being imposed on him to send back information and to intrigue with 'the disaffected chiefs whom he oppresses'.

Events in Europe made up the Government's mind for them. Word came that the French cause was labouring in rough seas; and gradually the Company came to share Ranjit's light-hearted assualt of the boggart they had shown him. But they shook their heads harder than ever over his turpitude. His agreement to co-operate had been merely to get 'concurrence in his ambitious designs and to be made safe against insurrection'.<sup>2</sup> This was not a nobly ethical friendship, a rushing of soul to meet with soul: he wanted to get something out of it, and kept asking, What? 'The habits and dispositions of the Rajah and his Government were entirely Military and his views exclusively those of conquest and inordinate ambition.' This was Ranjit's great fault—ambition;

<sup>1</sup>Letter of October 14.

<sup>2</sup>Summary by the Secret Committee, London, Aug. 18, 1810.



## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

and with it went another flaw. He was 'too full of suspicions and jealousy to be a satisfactory friend'.

On October 17, Seton—raising objections in serried ranks, to be successively disposed of by some wise compromise, just when his reader must be aghast ('by our lakin, a parlous fear!' 'No, no! I have a device to set all right')—went thoroughly into this cis-Satlej question. His solution was that perhaps the Company might guarantee the chiefs' paying Ranjit tribute, Ranjit promising not to cross the Satlej to enforce payment and the guarantors promising not to interfere except to ensure payment. This (with much underlining) could be done on grounds of *indulgence*, not of right. If Ranjit would not at once accept this proposal, it would at any rate lead to amicable discussion, and ultimately some arrangement. For this advice, the Supreme Government thanked him very much; and made up their minds to act against it.

They decided to forget the French peril, as after all only in the realm of allegation. The important *fact* was that if Ranjit came up to their borders it meant trouble later. British credit, it was now discovered, was involved in helping the chiefs: and 'a confederacy of friendly chiefs rendered grateful by our protection and interested in our cause', ready to allow use of their territories, would be better neighbours than 'an ambitious and military power'. It was true that when these chiefs had applied for protection, claiming that the British had succeeded the Marathas in their part of India and that they themselves had thereby passed from one master to another, they had been informed that all that had happened was that they were absolved from their subjection, and set 'in that condition of independance which they had a right to enjoy'. The Government had then no obligation except to regulate its conduct according to circumstances and its own interests. Nevertheless, it now acknowledged an obligation to see that 'an intended benefit' should not be converted 'into an instrument of Destruction'. Metcalfe was accordingly instructed, October 31, to order Ranjit to recross the river and to tell him

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

that his Government took the cis-Satlej chiefs under protection. The Governor-General sent Ranjit a letter to this effect; and the Commander-in-Chief made arrangements to move a detachment under Colonel David Ochterlony to the Satlej, to establish a military post on its southern bank. But Metcalfe was to keep open negotiations, and not leave unless compelled.

He had not forgotten one iota of his instructions, and on November 8 sent Edmonstone a confidential report of Ranjit's power. The Raja's 'jealousies' had deprived him 'of the means of giving any minute or valuable intelligence'; he could offer only 'the result of silent observation and unsought communications'. This modesty does his work injustice. Few more masterly or fuller reports can ever have been sent in by any agent. Everything is here: character and composition of every branch of Ranjit's forces, their uniform, pay, discipline, conditions of service: his artillery: his total strength, his resources of money, fodder, rations: his habits. Finally, Metcalfe notes that disaffection, almost universal, 'might perhaps be taken advantage of to destroy effectually his power', if war should some day come. Fateh Singh, 'supposed to be particularly attached to the Rajah . . . is in reality particularly discontented with him; accorded an outward show of intimacy', Fateh Singh was excluded from his master's secrets. Fateh Singh might prove useful. 'This is the chief who was in Lord Lake's camp on the banks of the Beeas; he there acquired a respect for the British character, which causes him to look to the British Government with the hope of obtaining from it a release from the overbearing tyranny of Runjeet Singh.'<sup>1</sup> It is hard to see how Metcalfe's Government could have been told more.

Seton in Delhi never failed Metcalfe; he and Ochterlony gave the constant assurance of supporting friendship. To the latter he was 'dearest Charles'. Seton's letters ended always with a genuinely fervent prayer, 'God bless you, Dear Metcalfe'; and were written with what would in any other man have seemed an

<sup>1</sup>*Selections from the Papers of Lord Metcalfe*, 25-33.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

insincere gushing of flattery, but which in him is sign-marked with modesty and sincerity. There were many reasons why the British with tiny forces overran India; one was this intimacy of equal friendship, which gave men in loneliness and peril the knowledge that proud and trustful eyes were following them. 'I am happy to find, You are on the way to meet Polyphemus—and long most impatiently for the result of your communications to him.'<sup>1</sup> 'Our excellent friend Fagan is in health truly *Hygeian* . . . and who that knows him would wish him other than he is?'

It would be tedious to relate how Ranjit marched about the country, while Metcalfe followed. Letters told of ineffectual efforts to wrest an audience; Ranjit was too busy. When the Raja of Patiala went through 'the forced farce of interchanging turbans', all but one of the cis-Satlej chiefs had acknowledged allegiance to him. He remained good-tempered towards Metcalfe ('evinced a desire to be friendly and conciliatory'), though too preoccupied to see him; and when his visitor, tired of wandering, settled down, hearing that the site was not to his liking Ranjit wrote 'in the most civil manner' to suggest a better one. When Metcalfe was shot at during an evening airing, 'the trivial circumstance was reported to the Rajah and magnified', and Ranjit wrote that he was sending troops and artillery to 'plunder and destroy any village that had behaved in a disrespectful manner'. This zeal in friendship's cause was of course eyewash. The commander of these troops had orders to obey Metcalfe's wishes absolutely, and Ranjit knew the latter better than to imagine that his sense of wounded dignity would demand a holocaust to propitiate it. Also, with all his sins, Ranjit disliked taking life. Metcalfe, however, was sufficiently imposed on to report that he had had some difficulty in saving the village that had been the scene of the outrage.

The British Government were 'satisfied' (November 7)<sup>2</sup> that

<sup>1</sup>Seton, December 4. Ranjit had only one eye.

<sup>2</sup>Edmonstone to Metcalfe.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

Ranjit would never be 'its cordial friend'; an agreement with him 'would be mere waste paper'. It was the Company's interest to see his rule subverted (it was added, honourably, nothing must be done to bring this about). A treaty, however, might prove embarrassing if internal rebellion came. So Metcalfe was merely to procrastinate his stay as long as possible, doing as little as possible.

Meanwhile the Company's ablest soldier was silently marching to occupy Ludhiana, and another 7,000 troops were sent in support. Edmonstone told Metcalfe that he was officially to 'know nothing of these matters', for which reason Ranjit Singh was not notified of them either. Metcalfe (December 3) sent the Commander-in-Chief, General Hewett, a résumé of events, and his own conclusions. Ranjit's pride was so involved in the retention of the cis-Satlej states, 'that I have no hesitation in offering it as my opinion that nothing but a conviction of the absolute impossibility of disputing the point with us with the smallest hope of success would induce him to assent to our demands'. Common sense no doubt would warn him back. On the other hand—'his rooted jealousies' might make him suspect that these states were only the beginning of a conquest of the Punjab, and he might think a struggle now less dangerous than quiet submission. Ideas of honour might make defeat seem preferable to ignoble capitulation. 'His knowledge of the moderation of the British Government'—a favourite and often-dwelt-on conviction of Metcalfe's in these days, and one from which he fled to another extreme of opinion, before he left India—'towards a fallen enemy may diminish in his sight the ultimate dangers of a contest.' Finally, 'a certain degree of confidence which he reposes in his fortune, and a belief in the infallibility of predestination, may afford some encouragement to his elated mind'. His present delay gave no indication of his purpose, one way or the other. But he was mobilising, and 'this step, unaccompanied by any explanation, cannot bear any favorable interpretation. Indeed, it appears to me to be offensive, and I shall think myself authorised

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

to require an account of it. Even this measure, however, may proceed more from fear and suspicion than from a determination to oppose us.'

Ranjit, however, was in no mood to meet what was coming, or even to guess at it. He felt he had done enough marching and annexing. He wanted wine, women and song; and more particularly the two former. He had told Metcalfe he would see him on December 1, on the Satlej banks. When Metcalfe reached the rendezvous he found his host had made a lightning march to Amritsar. 'Runjeet Singh, in everything he undertakes, is impatient; but the cause of his extraordinary impatience on this occasion was a desire to see his favourite mistress Marar, from whom he has been separated for nearly three months. In her arms he has been resting after the fatigues of his campaign.'

Metcalfe reached Amritsar, December 10, and at once tried to see Ranjit. Ranjit, in convivial mood, declined to discuss affairs and instead treated Metcalfe to strong drink and nautch girls, and was exceedingly jovial. Metcalfe responded with joviality (with reservations). The Sikhs were 'incapacitated for business'. So he left the Governor-General's letter about the cis-Satlej States, and went home to write a menacing letter of his own. This recapitulated events as he saw them, and expressed indignation that the Maharaja had proceeded to conquer territory whose future was a matter of argument. The British Government desired no territory, having no ambition except the good of all men and of its own subjects in particular. But the cis-Satlej States were now definitely taken into its sphere, and the Maharaja must accept this fact or face a dark alternative which was never mentioned but overhung unmistakably every sentence of this astonishing letter. It is doubtful if Metcalfe's Government would have sanctioned such a letter, unless as the precursor of a declaration of war; the writer was clearly wrought up to tense anger. But he wrote with strength as well as passion, his sentences were controlled and deliberate. In this document, for the first time Metcalfe showed his full stature. He was taking immense risks

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

involving his mission and his career. He took them with eyes wide open on what he was doing.

Ranjit Singh, who had not even read the Governor-General's letter, staggered as under 'sudden shock' when he read Metcalfe's. He saw him next day, and, though he did no business, was humble and apologetic, and invited him to accompany him to Lahore. Amritsar had become an unpleasant place, from what we may style domestic troubles. Ranjit's mistress, a Muhammadan, had proselytised a Hindu. The ecclesiastical authorities signified disapproval of these extra-professional activities by ordering a *hartal*,<sup>1</sup> and the laity, not to be outdone in spirited reprisal, sacked the quarter where Muslim ladies of pleasure resided. Ranjit decided on a change of scene. But the tumults pursued him, and Hindus sat *dharna*<sup>2</sup> round his palace in Lahore, where Metcalfe found him depressed, and pleading (December 18) for leisure to rest and think. These disturbances, he pointed out, were exhausting. Besides, his counsellors had gone to their own homes.

Metcalfe had taken his stand, and from now on permitted no relaxation. Ranjit's ministers tried to soften him, as they had tried before (when his response had always been, that all this ground had been gone over repeatedly and there was nothing more to say). Now his answer was grimmer.

'I asked what explanation I should offer to my Government for the delay which had taken place on the part of the Rajah. Imaum-ood-deen begged me to bear in mind that the Rajah, from the earliest age, had been without control; that his disposition had, in consequence, become ungovernable, that he had throughout life acted according to his pleasure; that God had prospered all his undertakings . . . that allowances ought to be made for these considerations. I observed that the Rajah's eccentricities were evident enough, and that I had been often amused by them; that they would, indeed, be

<sup>1</sup>Cessation of business.

<sup>2</sup>Besieging an opponent or debtor, and threatening him with having your death on his hands.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

very entertaining if they did not interfere so much with important business; but that I could not state that to my Government to account for the Rajah's conduct. . . . The British Government, I remarked, could only judge of the Rajah by his acts, and if these were improper, could not think of justifying them by any reference to his education . . . it was indispensable that he should lay aside the notion that he might act according to his own pleasure without regard to the rights and dignity of the British Government.'

This was hard on Ranjit, who after all had not been consulted as to whether he wanted the mission; and presently, when he had pulled himself together, Ranjit was himself to make some comments very much to the point. Now, however, time was killed, pending the Raja's awakening from his sensual stupor, by conversations continuing between the Envoy and the sirdars. Metcalfe, having simplified his position, stood to it; and went over his old arguments. He took the high hand of superior power: had made his decision and was not going to budge.

He at last got his interview with Ranjit, on December 21, when 'all that the wily Sikh could do was to repeat oft-refuted arguments, and to put unprofitable questions', which the Envoy 'answered plainly and firmly, with undeniable logic'.<sup>1</sup> 'Undeniable logic', however, if by this is meant logic that no one denies, is a thing rarely met with, except in our dreams. Ranjit on this occasion did a great deal of denying. He observed that he had been allowed to march south of the Satlej frequently, when the British Government had shown that they had no intention of exercising authority there. Their slightest exercise of it would have settled the secular quarrel of the Raja and Rani of Patiala, 'which was at its height when Lord Lake was in that neighbourhood'. When Lake returned from the Punjab, if he had left even one battalion on the Satlej, 'no one would have disputed the right of the British Government to supremacy'. Cis-Satlej chiefs who had gone to Delhi to complain against him had been

<sup>1</sup>Kaye, *Life of Metcalfe*, i, 292.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

snubbed, and most of them had now acknowledged his supremacy. 'From all these facts a conclusion was drawn that the British Government had renounced its claims, and that the Rajah was justified in considering that country open to his arms.'

Metcalfe's reply was that it was unnecessary to prove original right, when once the British had become possessed of the power formerly wielded by the Marathas in that part of Hindusthan. Though they had never taken tribute from the cis-Satlej chiefs, and had allowed them to conduct their concerns without control, they had never renounced their right over them, 'nor ever intended that they should be subjugated by any other power'. Non-interference had been solely in order to give 'the utmost practicable degree of independance'. Ranjit's 'excursions' had been professedly at the chiefs' own request: his stay had always been brief: he had not seemed 'to entertain designs of settled conquest'. Those chiefs who had gone to Delhi for help had not been informed 'that they should not be protected, but it was then believed that their alarms were unfounded'; so they were told that the British Government would be the judge of the necessity or otherwise of making a declaration to Ranjit Singh, and would act as events should hereafter require. Ranjit's latest excursion had not been by request, and was avowedly for conquest. The chiefs had no right to throw off their allegiance.

Making no direct reply to all this, Ranjit tried to obtain a compromise. His suggestions showed such an awareness of the concessions which Seton had proposed to the Supreme Government, and of the Government's original purpose, that we may presume there had been leakage, as well as his own intelligent guesswork. He suggested that he should retain authority over the chiefs, but engage not to send troops across the Satlej. Metcalfe refused. Ranjit then expressed surprise that the mission had changed from its first aim. Before Metcalfe came, all had been well, and 'he could not refrain from observing that it was an extraordinary kind of friendship that the Envoy had established'. Metcalfe, at last entire master of the situation and ready for all



## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

difficulties, answered that Ranjit himself had changed the basis of negotiation. 'To this the Rajah good-humouredly assented.'

On December 23, they met again, and Ranjit conversed in friendly fashion while his counsellors considered matters. Then, 'on a hint from the party aside, the Rajah withdrew to join them and after a consultation sent them to me with a message, and proceeded himself with a surprising levity to mount his horse and prance about the courtyard of his residence'. In Metcalfe this celebrated action would indeed have been surprising levity; he was the Englishman in India who least understood how bodily exertion may expel extremity of mental tension. Meanwhile Ranjit's Wazir, Aziz-ud-Din, delivered the Counsellors' reply. What use (he asked) was a small post on the Satlej, to deter the terrible French? Metcalfe had the sense to drop the French nonsense and demand a plain answer about the cis-Satlej chiefs. Ranjit having now dismounted, there ensued another and very long consultation, after which Metcalfe was told that the British detachment on the Satlej would not be opposed, if it were moved there in agreement with the Raja and in a friendly manner. Metcalfe said that everything would be perfectly friendly, if his requisitions were met in every particular. This meant a third consultation, and the final answer was that all his requisitions were accepted. 'And so', wrote Metcalfe, in wrath and indignation, 'the demands that I had presented, respecting which I had not been able for a fortnight to procure the least answer, were now treated as if they were mere trifles with which there was not the smallest difficulty in complying.'

Next day, however, he was told that Ranjit must consult his sirdars before he could consent to the detachment on the Satlej. Asked to follow again to Amritsar, Metcalfe's temper gave way utterly. He flared out that this conduct was disrespectful in the extreme to his Government—whose suzerainty over all India the British now took for granted (though the Jumna was still their legal boundary). Yet when Ranjit complained to Metcalfe's *munshi*, that 'when he made any proposal, I replied that I had

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

no authority, but when I brought forward my own proposals, I issued my commands to him as authoritatively as if he were only a Jagirdar', the charge distressed Metcalfe, who wrote almost tearfully:

'Considering the efforts which I have always made to conciliate the Rajah—considering the patience and forbearance which I have exercised from first to last in my communications with him—considering that I have been barely acquitted by my own Government of the fault of carrying moderation to a disgraceful length—and considering, moreover, that the late proceedings at this Court have put my patience to a severer trial than it had ever before undergone—I did not expect this charge from the Rajah.'<sup>1</sup>

Because of Metcalfe's protests, the march to Amritsar was abandoned. Ranjit, however, continued to postpone his day of withdrawal, asking for the cis-Satlej territory, and for a general treaty of perpetual friendship and an engagement not to help any insurrection against him. Also, if British troops should wish to march across the Punjab to Kabul, he wanted time, routes, and dispositions taken to guard depôts established in his dominions, to be arranged with his concurrence: that, once the war with the French was finished, all Company's troops should leave the Punjab, and all depôts be abandoned: that misrepresentations by his enemies should be ignored; that no beef should be killed in the Punjab, to feed the British soldiers.

The cis-Satlej chiefs' replies reached Delhi, January 10, 1809. They admitted that they had practically all sworn allegiance to Ranjit. The Raja of Patiala 'had been compelled by the influence of terror into Engagements of Alliance', ratified by oaths and exchange of turbans ('a ceremony deemed sacred in that country'). It was recognised that it was now doubtful if the cis-Satlej chiefs would dare to help; but Ochterlony was ordered to advance and eject the Umbala garrison, Ranjit having withdrawn all the rest of his army across the river.

Ranjit now returned to Amritsar, where Metcalfe also settled

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Edmonstone, January 4, 1809.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

down. On January 6, the former sent his Umbala commandant an order to withdraw. He thought he had now sufficiently met the demands upon him, and when he heard that British troops were on the march he expressed surprise and anger. Metcalfe 'explained' the march 'as constituting part of that defensive system which was rendered necessary by the menaced Invasion', and was aggrieved that Ranjit 'appeared incredulous' though he 'did not offer any serious objection to the establishment of a Post on the Sutledge'. Metcalfe warned the British Commander-in-Chief that the Sikhs were preparing to resist, and proposed to leave; General Hewett asked him to wait until all was ready. Ochterlony reached Ludhiana, and on February 9 proclaimed a protectorate over the Sikh minor states.

Metcalfe now called on Ranjit and took him glad news:

'I had been instructed to intimate to him that authentic intelligence had been received of the French having suffered repeated defeats in Europe from his Majesty's armies and those of his allies; and of their being in embarrassments which would render impracticable the prosecution of those hostile projects against this country, against which it was the object of my mission to provide.'

With this joy he brought sorrow also. 'The whirligig of Time had rendered an anti-Gallican alliance with the rulers of the Punjab a matter of small concern';<sup>1</sup> a treaty was no longer necessary. Ranjit stood up to the blow like a man, and showed that he had not yet exhausted his capacity for astonishing the British Envoy. 'The Rajah did not express the disappointment which I had expected.'

In February's last week the Mohurruum fell, and Metcalfe's Muhammadan sepoy's paraded their *tazias*. A body of *akalis*, 'Immortals'—enthusiasts whom Ranjit used as berserks or shock troops, too infatuated to fuss about being flung away in battle—marched from the Golden Temple, February 25, and attacked the British camp. They were routed in a sharp little skirmish.

<sup>1</sup>*Life of Metcalfe*, i, 305.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

Ranjit came up at its close, deeply impressed, and sent out soldiers to protect the mission, which moved into open country.

This incident is supposed to have finally decided Ranjit on submission, and he evacuated all his recent acquisitions, except Faridkote. He had some show of right to keep this, for, though newly taken, it was a dependency of an earlier conquest. Metcalfe referred the question to the Governor-General, who rejected Ranjit's claim. Ranjit lost control for a time, and Metcalfe was put to many vexations, including the robbing of his mails (which contained much that he can hardly have wanted his host to read). He demanded his passports, and suggested to the Commander-in-Chief an immediate invasion. His Excellency's instructions forbade this, however. Ranjit apologised, and humbly asked leave to send vakils to Ochterlony, to show that he concurred in the military post established at Ludhiana. This request Metcalfe conceded.

Again delays supervened. Agents from Sindhia and Holkar appeared in Ranjit's camp, and he sent agents back ('which the British Government did not deem it expedient to resent'). Not that he was thinking of resistance—he had merely sunk back exhausted into what we must style family life, from which again Metcalfe roused him. 'The Maharajah', he wrote, March 26, 'is revelling in delight in the Shalimar gardens. . . . What Friendship requires is not done, nor is it doing. . . . I therefore, in the name of the British Government, require my dismissal.' The alarmed Maharaja forsook pale hands beside the Shalimar, and assured the Envoy that the delights of the Garden of Friendship far exceeded those of a garden of roses. Faridkote was evacuated, April 2. The main British army withdrew to a less menacing position, leaving Ochterlony at Ludhiana.

At last, April 25, 1809, the Treaty was concluded, a brief and simple one. Ranjit was left his older possessions south of the Satlej, but was to keep there no more troops than were needed to police them, and was to leave the cis-Satlej chiefs alone. The Company engaged not to interfere north of the Satlej.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

For some mysterious reason, Ranjit attached special importance to the third and final clause, that if any part of the treaty were broken or there were 'a departure from the rules of friendship', the whole should be null and void. 'In the true spirit of diplomacy' he 'tried to outreach' Metcalfe, by asking the Governor-General to omit this proviso. The Governor-General refused, and told him he knew of his intrigues with Sindhia and Holkar. Nevertheless, the British would withdraw from Ludhiana on the strength of the engagements he had now made.

To this withdrawal, however, the Commander-in-Chief demurred, and persuaded the Governor-General to defer it on the grounds that the British had not pledged themselves to withdraw at any specified time. The British in consequence never did withdraw from Ludhiana.

All was now over but the usual jollifications, which were unusually sincere. Metcalfe entertained Ranjit, April 28; Ranjit entertained Metcalfe two days later, 'and the Rajah's behaviour was particularly friendly and agreeable'. 'The wily and unscrupulous ruler of the Sikhs' wanted peace. The British, too, were well pleased. They had failed to get a defensive alliance. But they were looking on their affairs with some complacency; the Corsican ogre was being badly shaken. They bore their partial failure, therefore—as Ranjit bore his—with equanimity. They had compensation in their success in an unforeseen direction, the extension of suzerainty to the Satlej, and in a mass of valuable inside information concerning the Punjab. This information, they thought, was likely to prove useful some day. They had pushed Ranjit Singh to a distance, and established buffers to serve as shock-absorbers if trouble ever came. These buffers, the cis-Satlej chiefs, were taken into the Company's system on easy terms. No tribute was demanded.

The Secret Committee in London, reviewing the course of events, approved also, though left doubtful 'if the political system enjoined from home and announced by the late Marquis Cornwallis and Sir George Barlow can be in future adhered to'.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

What had been done 'appears to have demanded a more grave consideration than is bestowed on it'; there had been a departure 'from the principles laid down in the Orders of the 19th October, 1805, and 27th February, 1806'. Still, what was done was done.

The most personally important episode of Metcalfe's visit remains deeply mysterious. It was the custom of Indian princes to offer every manner of hospitality; broad-minded men, the British serving on the Company's vast wild frontiers as a rule accepted it. Palmer at Poona, Kirkpatrick at Hyderabad, Collins wherever he was, lived in kingly fashion; even Lord Teignmouth, remembered reverently as one of the Bible Society's founders, in younger days had his liaison. Delhi Residency records contain an application for assistance, by one of Ochterlony's mistresses after his death, and local tradition tells how when he was Resident the gallant soldier's thirteen wives evening by evening took the air on thirteen elephants. This sounds like folklore. But Heber's testimony<sup>1</sup> tells on what a majestic scale he conducted his affairs of every sort. So does Sohan Lal's; he reports more than once that 'the glorious sahebs' (among whom on occasion was Metcalfe), coming to elaborate junketing with Ranjit, complained that sentries had been posted too close to their harems, besmirching their honour.

Kaye suppresses the fact that Metcalfe had three Eurasian sons. If he lived as almost every man then lived, and most of all his fellow-lords of the marches, it would not be matter for surprise. He may have so lived. On the other hand, there is tradition, vague but respectable, that his children's mother was of good family and that he married her 'by Indian rites', whatever that means. In my opinion, it means that she was a Sikh lady. Behind their relationship (tradition faintly affirms) lay a romantic and probably tragic story. But he kept his secret from posterity, and all who knew him kept it for him. What is important is that he found his wife (for they lived together at least eight years) at Ranjit Singh's Court, since his eldest boy, Henry Studholme,

<sup>1</sup>*Journey*, ii, 392.

## THE MISSION TO RANJIT SINGH

was born in 1809 (though not baptised until 1813). This much I have discovered from the old baptismal records. I believe that if we knew more we should understand better why Ranjit made his treaty and always cherished an affectionate memory of Metcalfe, almost as of one who was a member of his own family.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE DELHI RESIDENT

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'I hold now, as Resident at Delhi, a situation which I consider without exception in every respect the highest in the country beneath the members of Government; and I do not wish to quit this situation until I quit India.'  
—Metcalf, September 10, 1811.

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Metcalf left Amritsar, May 2, and commenced his return. On May 28, Edmonstone wrote instructing him to apply formally for leave to visit Calcutta, but to start at once: 'this intimation you may consider as sufficient authority'. The Governor-General had written home to Lady Minto, 'I have lately conceived a very high opinion of his talents and character, and particularly of his cool judgment and conciliatory disposition'. Metcalf was the most celebrated young man in Asia:

'During the course of your arduous ministry at the Court of Lahore, the Governor-General in Council has repeatedly had occasion to record his testimony of your zeal, ability and address . . . your conduct . . . has established a peculiar claim to public applause, respect and esteem.'

His fame had reached England also, where Warren Hastings himself congratulated Lady Metcalf. She took the occasion to remind him that Charles was not her only distinguished child:

'I want words to express the feelings of my mind on the flattering approbation which your Letter contains; that my Children have been my most Indefatigable study and I may say with Cornelia "These are my Ornaments" I am not ashamed to acknowledge; not one only, but *all*. My first principle was the Culti-



## THE DELHI RESIDENT

vation of the Mind: and tho I am proud of my success, Accomplishments were a secondary consideration.<sup>1</sup>

Hastings wrote verses on slight provocation, and generally badly; and had written some for Metcalfe's youngest sister Georgiana, who was still a schoolgirl. He forced on every acquaintance acceptance of the convention that all merit flowed from his adored Marian, as in loyal Japan from the Emperor. Georgiana accordingly in reply requested 'her most grateful acknowledgments to you and Mrs. Hastings, to whose influence She ascribes the accomplishment of her wishes, as it is a Book which most likely will be handed down to Posterity. She was anxious for a Memento of a Person so distinguished for Talent and greatness of Character.'

At the year's beginning, Theophilus had arrived again in Calcutta, on sick leave from China, with his wife and daughter—to find that Charles was negotiating with a semi-fabulous chieftain on the edges of Central Asia, all men praising his wisdom and firmness, and his wonderful despatches. Charles reached Calcutta, July 8; but he had to follow the Governor-General almost immediately to Madras, as his Deputy-Secretary, on the same pay as during his mission to Ranjit—Rs.2,000 a month.<sup>2</sup> The post merely camouflaged a holiday on full stipend. The Governor-General wanted to get to know him; that was all.

The voyage from Calcutta to Madras took a week to a month, as the weather dictated. The south-west monsoon drifted Metcalfe about in wind and rain, from August 5 to September 11. Afterwards, everything went delightfully. Minto had no lack of judgment or ability, but his temperament and manners were easy, far unlike either Wellesley's haughty imperiousness or Barlow's frigidity. The Indian scene amused him; his letters to his wife in Scotland are witty and charming. He was uncommonly good for

<sup>1</sup>Warren Hastings Additional Correspondence, General, British Museum MSS., Vol. LIII—March 2, 1809.

<sup>2</sup>Date of Instructions, July 15.

## THE DELHI RESIDENT

Metcalfe, who during his Punjab mission had sometimes fallen into a portentousness natural enough, in view of his immense responsibility. He now had no duties except to enjoy himself with highly placed friends in Madras or with the Governor-General, who made his household a centre for interesting men and fascinating women. Minto found a notable addition in Metcalfe, 'the ugliest and most agreeable clever person—except Lady Glenbervie—in Europe or Asia'. Their relations were ever after shot through with affectionate good humour. When in December Metcalfe visited that stalwart Howe Boy, Arthur Cole, in Mysore, the Governor-General pretended he was on another great mission, and hoped he had 'by this time afforded another proof of your diplomatic powers by making my peace with Mr. Cole, and that he will not have proved implacable in the hands of one who gained the tender affections of Runjeet Singh'.

Metcalfe returned to Madras from Seringapatam, and learnt, in January, 1810, that his brother's wife had died in Calcutta; her husband and child were going home. In May, Minto returned to Bengal, taking his Deputy-Secretary with him. Even this favoured person, it was recognised, could not expect to be on holiday for ever; so, since it was recognised also that he could never be used in any post but one of first rank, he was sent to be Sindhia's Resident, succeeding Graeme Mercer, the most experienced Political in India, now retiring.

Metcalfe disliked Marathas and Maratha affairs, and had a particular distaste for Daulat Rao Sindhia. We need not look any further for its origin, than to the period of his supreme humiliation, when he had served under King Collins. In the East everything is known, and was known most widely in these days of confidential *munshis*, the 'under-secretaries' of that Persian-conducted diplomacy. Charles Metcalfe, the ambassador to Ranjit Singh, could hardly have liked going back where Collins had formerly slighted and snubbed him. The post meant also a drop in salary, from Rs.2,000 to Rs.1,500 a month.

## THE DELHI RESIDENT

He endured the experience, however, while detesting it; and he knew what everyone knew, that he was merely marking time. On February 20, 1811, Lord Minto wrote one of his caressingly gracious letters, to tell him that he was trying to persuade Seton to go to Penang as Governor. If he succeeded, he warned Metcalfe, 'I shall, with (or without) your consent, name you to the Residency of Delhi. . . . If you ask my reasons for so extraordinary a choice, I can only say that, notwithstanding your entire ignorance of everything connected with the business of Delhi—a city which, I believe, you never saw; and with Cis and Trans-Sutlejean affairs, of which you can have only read—and notwithstanding your equal deficiency in all other general qualifications, I cannot find a better name in the list of the Company's servants; and hope, therefore, for your indulgence on the occasion.'

He knew Metcalfe's 'martial genius and your love of camps' (and consequent reluctance to leave Sindhia); and 'I fancy you must have given me a sly bite, for I am going campaigning myself'. He was off to the conquest of Java.

Six days later, Minto told Metcalfe that Seton had accepted his new post, on condition that it should be only during the war in the Dutch Indies, and that afterwards he should return to Delhi. He begged Metcalfe not to decline the Delhi Residency on this account, and hinted that events were likely to make Seton's absence longer than he expected. If anything better than Metcalfe's present post should fall vacant, it would if possible be reserved for him, against Seton's return. In the announcement of his appointment, nothing was to be said implying that it was temporary. Thanking him for congratulations on the reduction of the Mauritius Minto added: 'I hope you will believe that your kind concern in these events and in any influence they may have upon my credit is, next to the public benefit, one of the greatest and most sensible pleasures I experience on the occasion.' The letter concluded with his usual signature to Metcalfe, 'sincerely and affectionately yours'. Edmonstone also wrote, a month later, formally repeating that Seton would perhaps return to Delhi,

## THE DELHI RESIDENT

'but by your present appointment you have got a *lien* upon it, which must secure your future permanent succession, and that, too, at no great distance of time' (for Seton could not stay in India much longer).

It is characteristic of Kaye—or, rather, of the times in which he wrote—that his first pages, in his account of Metcalfe's most important work and one of the greatest pieces of work that any Englishman ever did in India, are given up to elaborate explanation of the fact that it was in Delhi 'that Charles Metcalfe laid the foundation of the fortune which he subsequently amassed'.<sup>1</sup> Despite his generosity, 'he died in possession of a fortune which would have creditably sustained the peerage he had won'. Men wrote and spoke more frankly than they do now, of their working for wealth and distinction, but they were no more mercenary than we are in an age of noble sentiments. Metcalfe had been sent out to make a fortune, as his father had made one, and he would have thought it immoral to have neglected this duty.

He had begun in 1810, when he was Lord Minto's guest in Madras, with a new account-book, on whose front page he wrote firmly:

'I commence this account with a determination to lay by, henceforth for ever, a sum equal to £100 per mensem, to lay the foundation of a fortune. I have 2000 rupees per mensem. I find by calculation, that my expenses are at present 1200 rupees per mensem, and I mean to save 800 = £100.'

In passing, note that those heavy expenses were mainly because he had kept on his servants in both Calcutta and Delhi, instead of dismissing them. He made regular 'Financial Reports' to himself, from now on, and had a 'Contingent Fund' and 'Accumulating Fund'. He subscribed lavishly to funds raised for the families of Government servants who had died. He lent money, which he soon learnt to enter 'as an inefficient balance', something whisked down the wind. He bought tickets in the

<sup>1</sup>*Life of Metcalfe*, i, 325.

## THE DELHI RESIDENT

Calcutta Lottery. He paid out sums on account of revels—'remainder of a subscription to a masquerade given in January last, 1500 rupees'. But he went to Delhi possessed of not far short of 20,000 rupees, most of it earning money at the high rates of interest current in those days.

He was settling into a gentle melancholy, which in no way lessened the terrific concentration with which he worked through these magnificent years. He was alone in mood and temperament, and with fatalism he accepted India as the way for himself, though he saw it might be the wrong way for others. When his aunt Mrs. Monson gave up a nomination to India for her son, so far from condemning her action he wrote (September 10, 1811):

'I decidedly think you have done that which is best calculated to promote his happiness and your own, by keeping him at home. My father, I conclude, will blame you; for he thinks nothing equal to an appointment in this country. I confess that my ideas are different. Why should you make yourself and William miserable by parting, never perhaps to meet again? . . . What is there in India to recompense for such sufferings? Fortunes, as you justly observe, are not made rapidly. Take my situation. I have been more than eleven years from England; and it will be certainly more than eleven years before I can return. In these twenty-two or twenty-four years the best part of my life will have passed away—that part in which my feelings have been most alive. . . . I left my father and mother just as I became acquainted with them as a man . . . what a melancholy situation I may be in when I return to England! Where will be my connexions, my friendships, and even my acquaintance? Unknown in society, and even shunned as being an Indian, I certainly will never push my way into the society of fine lords and ladies, who may turn up their noses and think me highly honored by being in their presence.

'Neither will I ever fall back and take up my post in the ranks of Indian society. I recollect what it was, and know what it is. . . . I hope to lay by at the rate of £3,000 per annum, which in twelve or fifteen years ought to be enough to enable

## THE DELHI RESIDENT

me to live at home in the plain manner in which I mean to live as an Old Bachelor; for, you must know, that I have no thought of *ever* marrying, as I shall never have enough money for it. . . .’

He visualised a long procrastination of departure, until India finally held his bones. ‘An old Indian takes a long time to determine to quit his emoluments, and put his foot on board a ship for England. Many is the Indian who dies of staying “one year longer” in the country, like the gentleman on whose tombstone is inscribed,

*Here lies Mr. Wandermere,  
Who was to have gone home next year.’*

‘I lead a vexatious and joyless life’, he told Mrs. Monson, March 20, 1814. It was ‘only the hope of home at last that keeps me alive and merry’.

‘Nevertheless. . . . I do not mean to return to England to struggle with poverty, or to be forced to draw tight my purse-strings. The sacrifice that I have made I consider great. The recompense that I propose to myself is to have a competency, not merely for my own expenses, but to enable me to assist others without reluctance or restraint. My own expenses may, I think, be trifling. . . . But to put extreme economy out of the question, allow £1,500 or £2,000 for my own expenses. . . . Tell me what you think requisite for the support of a bachelor in a decent, comfortable manner. Add to that what would be requisite to procure a seat in Parliament. Add to that a sum to enable me to make presents freely to my friends, and to assist the distressed, and to contribute to public charities. Let me know the sum total, and I will make my arrangements accordingly.’

This line of thought became an obsession—the burden of his private letters for a quarter of a century.

In London meanwhile his father saw all in a golden haze, with good reason. John Malcolm had called, he told his son, March 31, 1813, with gratifying praises of Charles. ‘He has an applica-

## THE DELHI RESIDENT

tion before us for pecuniary compensation for his general Services, which I shall not fail on your account to attend to.' Sir Theophilus added a confidential report on the next Governor-General, Lord Moira:

'You will find him a high-minded man *open to flattery*, and totally careless on money matters. His Debts in this country are enormous and I think his intended stile of living in Calcutta will not *admit of any saving* out of the Salary. *This is for you only.*'<sup>1</sup>

This is mixed up with more cheerful matters. 'If the countenance of Royalty be of any consequence I may be vain of standing well with the Prince Regent, who honored me with an invitation to dine at Carlton House when his Royal Highness gave Lord Moira a dinner. The Duke of Cumberland professes a friendship, and the Duke of Clarence<sup>2</sup> is hail fellow well met with your Father.' He concludes by relating the striking compliment just paid to Warren Hastings, after he had given his advice, on the new East India Company Act, before the House of Commons.

Charles Metcalfe's youngest brother, Thomas Theophilus, was sent out in the autumn of 1812; and their father wrote somewhat anxiously, that he had good parts but that his last days in England had been attended by 'some circumstances too trifling to detail' though causing dissatisfaction and disquiet. They certainly included debts, which his father had settled. Charles was not to encourage him, by liberality, to expenditure beyond his situation. Charles was to let their father know of any money he advanced to him, which would be credited to him in London. Tom escaped from Fort William College in less than four months, and Lord Minto sent him to Delhi, which he reached, October 18, 1813, as one of his brother's assistants. The delighted Resident pronounced him 'a superior young man'.

At the end of this year, Metcalfe's father, who had been a wise and generous friend, died. The news did not reach him until the late spring of next year, and his work, which kept him at his desk

<sup>1</sup>*I.O.R., H.M. Series, 738 (11), 389-404.*

<sup>2</sup>Afterwards William IV.



SIR THEOPHILUS METCALFE,  
FIRST BARONET

Father of Charles Theophilus Metcalfe

*From the portrait by J. Hoppner, R.A., in the possession of  
Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, present baronet*





## THE DELHI RESIDENT

until nine every night (so that he began to understand that Seton's retirement from society had not been all eccentricity), left no time for grief, which with all other merely personal feelings he had now put away, as luxuries. Seton had returned, September, 1812, but the threat of his supplanting Metcalfe was removed by his appointment to the Supreme Council. He found this 'gratifying in the extreme; and you, my dear Metcalfe, will, I am persuaded, give me credit for the delight with which I indulge the reflection that the arrangement will necessarily fix you at Delhi. I really cannot express to you how awkward and distressed I felt every time that the idea came across me that I could not return to Delhi without being the means of your quitting that station. In vain did I try to reconcile my mind to it by turning to the "flattering unction" of its being necessary, in consequence of the state of my domestic concerns. . . . I still felt the awkwardness arising from the embarrassing reflection that I must either sacrifice the pressing claims of my family, or interfere with the views of my friend—and of such a friend! The present arrangement . . . has the advantage of tranquillising this painful struggle.'

It is astonishing, the unanimity with which it was accepted that this very young man must be given no place but the highest, and that even his temporary dereliction to a secondary position called for abject apology.

Seton at Calcutta continued his indefatigable friend, and supported him against what he styled 'the spoliation of the Delhi Residency', the removal of assistants when they had been drilled into his ways. Metcalfe addressed his complaints personally to this kind and unselfish man. 'More complaints, my Lord, and legitimate ones, too, from my excellent friend Metcalfe', said Seton, handing them over at the tea-table. 'Knowing them to be such', Minto confessed himself 'almost afraid to read them, more especially as I have not yet been able to write to him the explanatory letter which I have so long had in contemplation'. Writing again, and referring to the incident, Seton repeated Lord Minto's

## THE DELHI RESIDENT

conclusion that Metcalfe was in himself a host: '(his words were *Ipse agmen*), and consequently admirably qualified to do with less aid than most men—to enlighten even when "shorn of your beams".' He passed on this tribute, to one whom he knew 'to be greatly above all vanity'.

The long explanatory letter came at last, February 24, 1814, from the Cape of Good Hope. Lord Minto had left India, and on the voyage found time to write with affectionate leisure. He had 'offended against every right feeling' in leaving Bengal without 'a line to acknowledge the many proofs of the kindest, and to me the most flattering and gratifying, partiality, which you afforded me during the period of our acquaintance in India, and I am not disposed to aggravate my fault by carrying my silence round the Cape, and beyond the limit of the Company's quondam privileges'. His regard for Metcalfe had 'originated in the most perfect esteem', and been improved 'by a constant observation and experience' of his character and talents.

'This sort of plump declaration is, perhaps, seldom made, except to a different sex, just before the question is popped. Let it stand for once as an introduction, between a pair of the same gender, to a request which I feel a great inclination to pop, for a sincere, constant, and mutual friendship from this time forward. On my part it has begun long ago, and I have, therefore, a stock in hand, that may furnish a sort of security for my part of the bargain . . . if you sign the counterpart of this treaty, I shall positively expect you to keep me informed under your own hand, *proprio pugno*, of everything that in any degree concerns your welfare, credit, happiness, or comfort.'

He goes on to an elaborate explanation of his reasons for promoting Fraser and Gardner, Metcalfe's two best assistants, to better posts elsewhere. He proceeds to a dig at '*the Resident at Delhi*, a very unamiable character and dull companion', whom he had wished, by the subtle trick of removing his best subordinates, to bring into disrepute; and concludes with the assurance that the whole ship's company are this potentate's slaves, so that

## THE DELHI RESIDENT

without consulting them he can send him 'everything that is kind from the whole, of all ages and both genders'. He signs himself, having put by the robes of supreme authority and come at last on to the plane of equality where friendship was possible:

'Believe me ever, my dear Metcalfe,

(being entitled to this familiarity by the *contract*)

Faithfully and affectionately yours'.

Metcalfe's days of intimacy with Governors-General were finished. Lord Moira—whom it is usual to call by his better-known later title, Lord Hastings—assumed the government, October, 1813. He was in his sixtieth year, and his friendships were long over. He was stiff and disillusioned, and the artificial summer in which he had lived as a companion of the First Gentleman in Europe had dried his personality to a husk.

Metcalfe had at first no dealings with him, except by letter; and these were as cordial as the new-comer could make them. His father's inside information as to the Governor-General's character he was to find correct in every detail. Knowledge of his vanity came later, in a surpassingly painful episode; it was Lord Hastings's casualness in money matters which he learnt now. It smoothed over a bad passage for him, that of his alleged extravagance as Resident of Delhi.

Delhi had two Courts, the King's and the Resident's, the latter as convenient and impressive as the former was squalid. Metcalfe had 'his family', the soldiers and civilians attached to his office and their wives and children. It was a grandeur which cast deep shadows, in which he often sat alone. On Christmas Day, 1812, a party of fifty, 'among whom I cannot reckon one real friend', were his guests. He had to 'live in crowds' and keep a 'caravanserai'. Tourists and touring officials with their train swept into and through his house—strenuously vivacious people, arriving in the whirl and flutter that encompass official greatness in India, and demanding picnics, sight-seeing (in a region ruin-strewn for a hundred and fifty miles round), pig-sticking, shooting, delights appealing little to their host. 'I feel

## THE DELHI RESIDENT

myself out of my element in attempting to support the appearance which attaches to the situation I hold.' 'I am become very unsociable and morose. . . . I lead a vexatious and joyless life.'

For this viceregal—indeed, with that tattered tapestry of an empire shaking beside him, super-regal—position Metcalfe had what might be thought a generous grant, 'table allowance' of half a lakh yearly, its expenditure left to his discretion. But his ideas of hospitable duty also were royal. 'Every honorable man knew', he records in a *Minute* in 1830, that if he saved any part of his allowance 'he would be guilty of a shameful fraud'. When asked whether he himself had 'invariably and sacredly expended that allowance every month, I should be greatly ashamed of myself if I could not answer the question in the affirmative'.

As a matter of notorious fact, he had not only spent the allowance, he had overspent it. When he succeeded to the Residency he found it dilapidated and almost empty. 'There was not a single article of public property in the way of furniture for the house or equipment for the table.' What had served for Seton's preternaturally simple life had been his own, and had gone with him. Since the Residencies at Poona, Hyderabad, Mysore, Nagpur, and Sindhia's court had been furnished at public cost, Metcalfe assumed himself entitled to bring his own Residency up to their level, and bought plate and furnishings, making his purchases with some degree of tacit and general approval from the Supreme Government. They were not disposed to overlook too closely so esteemed and trusted a servant, and he would not have been Metcalfe if he had thought their approval of every detail of what he considered a trifling business consistent with his dignity. Consequently, he incurred 'charges of so enormous a magnitude' that the Directors' Auditor pronounced them 'unprecedented in amount'. The Court held them 'in every view unjustifiable' and censured the Supreme Government for passing them on 'without any mark of displeasure or reprehension'. They were 'directly in opposition' to 'regulations of which Mr. Metcalfe could not have been ignorant, and in a spirit of such

## THE DELHI RESIDENT

profuse extravagance, that we cannot possibly sanction any part of them without holding out to our servants in general an example of the most dangerous tendency . . . an assumed right to disburse the property of the Company at the discretion of the individuals divested of all wholesome control'. Metcalfe was 'peremptorily required' to pay into the Treasury the sum of Rs.48,119, as.6, pies 5. 'The property purchased thus irregularly' was to be considered his personal property, 'and not as constituting any of the Company's dead stock'.

This, as Shakespeare's bishops observe, would not only drink deep, it would drink the cup and all. But Metcalfe's Government were uniquely friendly. The one cold-hearted member, the Governor-General, had accepted the common enthusiasm, and in any case his own casualness in money matters made Lord Hastings think that the cheese-paring Directors were making a fuss over what any gentleman would have done. John Adam sent on their letter in all its stark severity, as in duty bound, but added that Lord Hastings thought they would come to a gentler mind. Their orders would not be enforced until 'the further directions of the Honourable Court' had been received. Adam sent a still more reassuring private note: the Government intended to resist 'the encroaching spirit of the Court of Directors'.

The Directors' unqualified condemnation roused Metcalfe to a resentment which never quite died down. Knowing, as he said, his whole-hearted service, 'it is with a feeling stronger than grief that I find myself selected for public disgrace'. He made a resolution never, so long as he lived, 'to make any application on my personal account'. When he left the Hyderabad Residency, in 1826, and returned to Delhi, he wrote that he had lost not less than £6,000 and perhaps as much as £10,000, 'but this will not even be known to the Government'. This loss had been partly by the huge expense of moving the Delhi Residency furnishings to Hyderabad, and then back again, but still more by the ruinous cost of those furnishings to begin with. He contrasted the two Residencies, 'the Hyderabad Residency having been completely

## THE DELHI RESIDENT

furnished by the *management* of my predecessors . . . at the expense of the Nizam . . . at that Residency I profited by their selfishness, and suffered a heavy loss in quitting it'.<sup>1</sup>

Neither party to this quarrel ever forgot it. I have no doubt whatever that it was part reason why he ultimately suffered the great disappointment of his life, when he was passed over for the Governor-Generalship. For that defeat there were other, more immediate causes. But memory of his early extravagance was one. The Directors were always in a fume about expense, and generally with reason. They could hardly be expected to realise that the Metcalfe whom they rejected in 1835 was the one man in India who rigorously tested every penny of expenditure before he reluctantly let it pass, and was willing to say openly at any time that the Services were overpaid and the whole administration costlier than the country could support.

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Georgiana Metcalfe, October 26, 1826: Clive Bayley MSS.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI

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'It is far from accurate to assert that the Dihlee territory is governed without laws.'—Metcalf, in 1830.

'It was one of the advantages of the system pursued at Dihlee, that all errors were open to correction, and that even if injustice were accidentally committed, it was not interminable.'—Metcalf, in 1823.

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**M**etcalf's district was the British-Indian frontier. It looked out to the north-west over the new-created cis-Satlej protectorate, under the guardianship of David Ochterlony at Ludhiana, that isolated watch-tower on the Punjab's borders. Southward was the no man's land of Rajputana, like the region where Satan found the ever-warring elements umpired by Chaos. Its states, similar in misery, were of many kinds—Rajput, Maratha, Amir Khan's and Muhammad Khan's peripatetic usurpations. Metcalf was keeper of a garden enclosed with luxuriant jungle which freely intersected its borders; Delhi and native India crisscrossed each other.

His powers, exercised in the King of Delhi's name, were absolute. Delhi was a 'non-Regulation' district, outside the codes of British India. Administration came under three heads: civil, judicial, political. His system, proudly named by him the Dihlee system, was partly a modification and selection of indigenous methods; many of its features originated with Seton. Detesting official ways (from which his experience had shaken him free) Metcalf would admit mistakes and go back on them; he had no sham dignity. He accomplished the greatest single administrative work ever put through by a British ruler, and if it had been



CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI accompanied by some impressive bloodshed his countrymen could not have forgotten it. It caused astonishment outside his territory, and aroused angry criticism.

The materials for its study are widely scattered, but the *locus classicus* is his own 1815 Report, a majestically regal document, lion-marked with the assumption that the writer is someone to whose experience you will be glad to listen, unless you are a fool. Its diction is supple and expressive, both because of this life-blood of personality pulsing through it and because of pervasion by the idioms of ordinary conversation. It covers the period, May 13, 1811, to July 12, 1815, and opens with curt apology (if the word can be used for what merely asserts the writer's conscious rectitude) that it had not been sent sooner. Other matters had seemed 'more urgent'; and that was that.

He had seven assistants. Three were absent when he made the Report. He observes that four would suffice if always present; and 'I would undertake to manage all the business of the Residency and the Territory in a tolerable way, through the agency of Natives alone, supposing that I could not be allowed the benefit of any European assistants'. He is emphatically for unification, for giving collectors magisterial and judicial duties, and he himself made no attempt to sift everything into non-communicating compartments. He freely mixed the various tasks, and is enthusiastic about his colleagues and their achievement. He has assistants, he says, on salaries of Rs. 500 a month, who are doing the combined job of judges and magistrates elsewhere. He himself, in addition to doing his own special work (he kept in his own control the Treasury and Pay Department), lent a hand anywhere and everywhere, whenever needed.

Metcalfe's experience, and the emphasis with which he always pressed home on others the lessons of his experience, had an immense deal to do with the change made in Lord William Bentinck's time, when collectors became magistrates also. This combination of judicial and administrative functions is part of the stock-in-trade of Indian political controversy, and one of the

CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI  
most unreal parts. At the time when it came first into being, it was a justifiable and necessary change, and its existence formerly is no matter for denunciation.

Administration fell into two sections, that of the City and that of the outlying districts. In the City there were three courts for civil cases. The lowest, for petty suits of a value under Rs.100, was conducted by three native commissioners, a *kazî*, a *muftî* and a *pandit*. There was an appeal to the Resident. In the period under review, the court had decided 1,750 cases, settled 4,705 by agreement between the parties, and dismissed 2,104; 102 cases were under trial and 667 were awaiting trial. Metcalfe expresses himself well satisfied, despite these arrears, and rather surprised by the amount of business done, than by the residue left unfinished. He praises the *muftî* especially, and discusses the possibility of getting rid of arrears of justice by establishing similar courts in other towns of the territory. But 'I have observed that pains taken to improve the administration of Civil Justice generally tend to encourage litigation'.

The second court was one for ordinary suits to any amount. Here, too, was an appeal to the Resident, who came in to help when the work grew heavy. Otherwise, the cases were heard by his assistants. There were no arrears. Four assistants (one of them his youngest brother) had decided 1,003 cases, settled 681 by accommodation, and dismissed 291. He himself had tried 137 cases, settled 57 by accommodation, and dismissed 13.

The third and highest court was the Resident's own, which was occupied chiefly in hearing appeals from the lower courts. From his court there was no appeal. He tried also, unassisted, all cases in which members of the Royal Family, Sovereign Princes, or Foreign Envoys were parties. He was accessible in person at least once a week to everyone whatsoever—a great help to poor or ignorant people, who were afraid of courts and lawyers or could not afford them. In this way, many disputes never came into the courts at all.

There were thirty-two prisoners in the civil jail. Imprison-

CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI  
ment for debt was whenever possible avoided, as he saw no sense in it. A discretionary power was exercised to release after long imprisonment, if the prisoner possessed no property. If the released person later on acquired property, it remained open to his creditor to prosecute him afresh.

That was the civil adjudicature. The criminal adjudicature was conducted by the Resident and two assistants, 'when they can be spared'. One assistant had charge inside the City, the other was always on circuit outside or else in merely temporary residence. Again, there were no arrears; trials were conducted as soon as ever the parties concerned and the witnesses could be assembled, and the work was given unremitting attention. The Resident supervised everything: officiated in the trial of the most heinous crimes: and took over an assistant's duties if he were absent. Metcalfe had tried 2,219 charges, and his assistants 917. In the year 1814 there had been 7 murders, 7 homicides, 27 highway robberies, 14 burglaries, 8 rapes. The rest of the offences were minor thefts. On July 12, 1815, there were 715 persons in the criminal jail.

Dacoity 'in any shape is scarcely known'; and, considering the extent of territory and the many difficulties due to the people's turbulence, the long tradition of disorder and chaos, and political complications, murder, highway robbery and burglary were less than might have been expected. The commonest crime was cattle-stealing, owing to the facility with which the booty could be carried into some native state.

Metcalfe explains with pride how he achieved his success. There were no detached houses, except occasional strongholds of *thakurs*; everyone huddled together for protection. In this 'confined state of society' everyone knew what his neighbour was up to. So he held the villages and the zemindars (who were formerly in collusion with robbers) to strict accountability. After a robbery in their borders, if the thief were not found they themselves made good the damage. The knowledge of this operated as a reward. Before the British came, the villages surrounding Delhi

CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI had been a sodality of criminals, parcelling out the capital as their prey, and 'generations must pass away before the Propensity is rooted out'. Now, instead of being 'in league for the purposes of general depredation', 'one is set against the other for their own Security'. Metcalfe explains the country's suitability for such a system, which he affirms was formerly in vogue in England and still in vogue in Ireland. More important, it was in accordance with indigenous practice and tradition. It was not unpopular, except with the robbers, who strongly disapproved of it.

This was the way the system worked, he explains. When a robbery occurred on the high road, the sufferer at once gave notice to the village and zemindar in whose lands the offence had been committed. The next step was their duty; they had to turn out immediately, and track the criminal down. The tracking was done largely by a skilled professional class, the *khojis*, who were almost as sure as hounds and followed by scent:

'A khojee will find a trace where it would be invisible to a common observer. Neither Rivers nor Jungles nor Rocks, where no impression of the foot can be made, will divert him from his purpose. He is almost sure to recover the trace, whatever interruptions may occur.'

The high roads offered more difficulty, as there the traces disappeared in a convergence of footsteps of men and beasts. Yet even there the *khoji* showed wonderful skill in disentangling the particular scent he was following. Also, robbers as a rule avoided the high road. When a village had traced a robber to another village, its own work was done, and that village took up the trail. The village and zemindar to whom the traces finally went paid the fine.

The system rarely caught the innocent. Also, Metcalfe kept a discretionary power, as always and in everything. If the fine were a small one, he usually inflicted it, even when he was doubtful of the *khoji's* findings, for the sake of the principle that the community was responsible for its members. If the fine were

CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI  
heavy, he would sometimes waive it. In the City the only thefts now were petty ones by vagabonds; but if the system of responsibility were relaxed there would be a return to the old mass-dishonesty.

There used to be gangs of very young boys, called 'pocket cutters', who infested Delhi. They belonged to what to-day is styled a criminal tribe, probably Doms; Metcalfe merely says that everyone knew them, and the method formerly was to give them a whipping if caught red-handed, and dismiss them to their vocation again. He had had them all arrested, and put in a Home of Industry, where they were taught to make blankets and carpets. Some had relapsed, but most now felt that they had a trade and were honestly keeping at it; and all had been released.

The police of the City and its environs were in good order, and criminal jurisdiction was conducted without much trouble. In the outlying districts it was more troublesome, especially because of the character and number of the neighbouring states. Metcalfe summarises some of these—the Nawabs of this and that, various Rajas and *thakurs*, with the startling irruption of a new title, 'the Plunderers' of several regions which he names. Some of these Princes were willing to help, a few were really useful, some were tractable and well-meaning, but many were mere pests and offered harbour to other pests. Especially on his western borders, were some who 'have thrown off the Yoke of their ancient Governments', and become 'Dens of Plunderers'. Reluctant as he was to enter into political questions, he foresaw that he would have to bring this problem up for special consideration soon. These independent states seeped in and out of Delhi territory, in places crossing even high roads. Yet, even in the country districts, he did not consider the police did badly.

Their chief helpers were the sweepers, those lowest of untouchables. The City police worked through them as their main instrument of information, a humble but very efficient C.I.D., with full inside knowledge. They had access to every house, and each morning they assembled in male and female cohorts at

CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI  
police headquarters, where they were bound to tell everything of consequence that had happened on the preceding day. 'Perhaps it is one of the effects of reposing confidence in them, that in general they may be relied on with security. . . . They consider themselves confidential officers of Government, and may in general be depended on as such.' They were helpful in the country parts also, though here they stood in some awe of the zemindars. This use of scavengers as 'confidential officers' was also in some degree practised before the British came.

The most surprising fact that emerges from this Report is that for eight years—Metcalf with proud meiosis observes that his is perhaps the only district of which this is true—there had been no case of capital punishment. Ranjit Singh (it will be remembered) was equally merciful; and certain Indian administrations, the Marathas especially, were on the whole (even when the practice of mutilation is weighed in the scale) far humaner than that of Great Britain at this time. But Charles Metcalfe, aged twenty-six, had abolished both mutilation and the gallows, and was waging no wars and destroying no cities, at a time when Ranjit Singh was in constant warfare and in England a code of nightmare severity was being enforced. He was ruling, with a handful of even younger assistants, an arrogant and turbulent people, quick to religious and political tumult; and from 1806 to 1819, the blood shed by the civil power amounted to practically nothing. It is a picture so astonishing that one does not know what to say of it. His own words, to his sister Georgiana, June 24, 1820, set out his achievement. He is asking himself the question asked so often—Ought he to go home at all, after twenty years residence in India?

'What should I be—What should I do in England? Should I be content to eat, drink, sleep and enjoy society, without performing any service for my Community? Pride and Duty both say no; and I am not sure that I should enjoy anything in that state of useless idleness. What then if I employ myself, how should it be? As a Country Magistrate? How trifling would the

CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI  
duties of that subordinate office appear after those which I have had to perform in this country! after being the Governor of a territory 150 Miles long and the same broad, almost without control, from the distance of the Supreme Government, with the power of life and death in my own hands (I thank God that having this power for 8 years I never inflicted Death but once, and that was for a vile unprovoked assassination) without even the restraint of laws, except those of equity and conscience! How insignificant and unworthy, and, if one entered into Parish Squabbles or contended for Parish Influence, how contemptible would the Duties of a Country Magistrate appear, after those which I have described!<sup>1</sup>

His reasons for abolition of capital punishment were, first, his contempt for the courts 'which are meant to perform so much good'. For these he had a loathing equal to Warren Hastings's, and he considered that they had debauched the people.

'Our Courts are scenes of great corruption. The European Judge is the only part of them, that is untainted. He sits on a Bench in the midst of a General conspiracy, and knows that he cannot trust any one of the Officers of the Court. Everyone is labouring to deceive him and to thwart his desire for justice. The pleaders have no regard for truth.'

The European judges themselves were also at fault, setting about their investigations with European ideas, and giving hasty decisions, that 'disgusted' the people. The courts were his main reason for his belief that Indians were happier under their own freer and more personal regimes. His Report concludes: 'There seems to be reason to apprehend that they would be happier under a just and well regulated Native Government, such as is sometimes though rarely to be found in India.'

Secondly, something of the disabilities of these courts entered, inevitably, into his own personal trials and decisions. He says that he could rarely be sure that the convicted man had been rightly convicted. Even in England, where such extra-

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS.

CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI  
ordinary pains were always taken to prevent a miscarriage of justice (it must be remembered that he had left it at the age of fourteen, with the ideas and knowledge of fourteen), the innocent were sometimes hanged. He refused, from humility and sense of fairness, to take on himself the fearful risk of putting to death wrongly. That action was irrevocable, whereas imprisonment was always open to cancellation.

These considerations were reinforced by his dislike of the convention by which his government was theoretically in the King of Delhi's name. By Lord Wellesley's treaty, sentences of death or mutilation had to go up to this attenuated majesty for sanction. Metcalfe had not the slightest intention of taking action that would open the door to endless intrigue and bribery.

The severest punishment inflicted by him was 'solitary close confinement in chains for life; and so great is the Horror of this Punishment that persons condemned generally petition that they may be hanged instead, and some have tried to put themselves to death'. To us to-day, this may seem a penalty worse than death, and one almost certainly leading to loss of reason. Yet Metcalfe's argument against inflicting death remains unweakened; and we have no right to expect him (though he generally was) to be abreast of times which even now have not come into existence. There was then no country which did not inflict this horrible close confinement for life, and inflict it in far more numerous instances than Metcalfe did—and which did not also inflict death by fiendish methods.

His principles of punishment he explains very plainly:

'If it were a matter of indifference to the community whether plunderers should be kept in confinement or let loose at large, I do not see why they should be confined. If their freedom do not injure society, I cannot understand what right we have to restrain them. For my own part, I confess that the benefit of the community was the sole object of all the punishments that I ever inflicted; which object was to be gained by double means—the actual removal of the individual offender from society by confinement, and the operation of example to deter



## CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI

others from crime. The recollection of punishment may sometimes prevent a repetition of crime, but in any other point of view I hold him to be a visionary who expects to produce moral reform by congregating hundreds of hardened villains in a common jail.’<sup>1</sup>

These principles made him against light penalties for serious crimes, as ‘exceedingly impolitic and unjust towards the community . . . the community which suffers from depredation is a much more legitimate object for tenderness than the villain who commits it’.

He was severely criticised in 1823 by a Board of Commissioners appointed to report on the administration of the North-Western Provinces. His resentments were apt to be lasting, and he never forgave his chief critic, Mr. Ewer, ‘a gentleman who without experience of the past hazards a sweeping condemnation on the system of my administration.’ The Commissioners were ‘now able to smile benignly on what they call innocent forgeries’, and made light of the crime of night-robbery accompanied by house-breaking, though ‘in my opinion there is none against which the community more requires the vigilant protection of a guardian government. The assurance of sleeping in security is one of the greatest blessings that can be conferred on our subjects. The reverse is unceasing apprehension and misery’. The case of severity picked out for special condemnation was that of a police guard who took advantage of his night watch to rob one of those he was protecting, and was sentenced to lifelong hard labour. Metcalfe remarks that he considered the community entitled to protection from depredation by those it had paid to protect it. His habit of punishing attempts to break prison, by doubling the previous sentence, was also cited specially, with the example of one man, originally sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment, and now, after three attempts to escape, under a sentence of fifty-six years. Metcalfe’s justification here may seem

<sup>1</sup>Letter to William Butterworth Bayley, Chief Secretary to the Supreme Government. Printed by Kaye without date, in *Selections*, etc.: probably about 1819.

CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI  
less convincing to-day. It is based, as we might expect, on the desperate character of some criminals, on the daring and activity of their friends outside the jail, on the peril in which the guards were put and their consequent fear. He shows himself conscious of some flaws in his defence, admitting that watchfulness was needed to prevent false charges by other prisoners anxious to have their terms reduced as a reward for informing, and he concludes by pointing out that he always kept in his mind the possibility of relaxing original severity if the need for it passed away.

The problem of punishment for faults committed against the community is still with us, and society has made little progress in solving it. Fairness compels admission of Metcalfe's sternness and of the criticisms of those who thought death less vindictive than long imprisonment. I pass on to his unquestionable achievements.

Swords 'and other implements of intestine warfare, to which the people were prone, were turned into ploughshares, not figuratively alone, but literally'. Villages surrendered their arms, which were given back in this new form. More amazing almost than his abolition of capital punishment was his discouragement and final abolition of corporal punishment. Also, he forbade widow-burning—an action easier here than it would have been in Bengal, for the Mogul Emperors had prohibited it, in the main successfully. But there had been a long period of chaos; and at Delhi's doors the barbaric Rajput states set the example of their ghastly holocausts.

Even more difficult was another abolition, also (and still more so) in advance of his age, that of the slave trade. He examines this problem (which was to meet him again, thirty years later, when he governed Jamaica) dispassionately. Many argued that Indian slavery, being mainly domestic, was infinitely milder than the slavery known in the West Indies and United States. He admits this. Slaves were often kindly treated, were made members of the family, or even heirs of their master's property. Yet,

## CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI

with his eyes wide open on the purposes for which young boy slaves were usually procured and on the brutality of the slave markets, he stood firm in his opinion, as to 'the indisputable evil and degradation of being the property of another'. He complained to Edmonstone, November 13, 1812, that slave merchants were increasing in Delhi. 'Being satisfied that it was not the intention of Government that this iniquitous traffic should be encouraged' he had prohibited 'this abominable commerce . . . the sale of Human beings in the town and country of Dihlee' (October 24, 1812).<sup>1</sup> What the British did in other parts of India was not his affair. His own time was passing, and he was answerable to his own stern-judging conscience.

Nevertheless, he had to fight to defend his action. His prohibition of the slave trade was sharply censured for having gone so far as to extend to the reselling of slaves already in the Delhi region, 'a measure which his Lordship in Council was not prepared to sanction'. It was disallowed, therefore; 'persons already in a state of slavery' were still to be liable to 'transfer by sale to other masters'.<sup>2</sup>

As this example shows, although where Indians were concerned he had, and exercised, autocratic powers, against his own people Metcalfe was helpless. The most deeply felt passages of his Report are given up to a burning indictment of the oppressions which some of them practised as they marched through his territory or visited it. They seized carts and animals, and pressed villagers to carry burdens, usually without payment. They refused to take the inconsiderable trouble of making arrangements beforehand; they simply appeared and demanded assistance, and immediately, of the nearest official (who, being generally an Indian, felt he must obey). As in Warren Hastings's famous journey up Ganges, when he reported that the British flag was flying on almost every boat, as a symbol of oppression, so now every sepoy and every official *chaprasi* claimed a dele-

<sup>1</sup>*Bengal Records, Judicial Consultations*, nos. 48 and 49.

<sup>2</sup>John Adam to Metcalfe, November 13, 1812.

CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI  
gated plenary authority, which they 'invariably exercise... without limit'. 'The European traveller of Rank' refused to relax what he held his privilege or to put himself to any trouble. It was 'a shocking act of Tyranny' to throw merchants' goods out on the road, because his Highness Ensign Smith desired a cart, and desired it at once. Villages near the high road had been abandoned, their inhabitants had fled out of reach. Death often resulted from the impressment of coolies.

'In the Exercise of this Supposed right, very distressing Cruelties are committed. Women are more commonly employed than men. Women far gone with Child, or women with Infants at the Breast, are often to be seen, laboring under loads with a burning Sun above their heads, a scorching Sand beneath their feet, and a fiery wind blazing round their bodies.'

Metcalf writes despairingly, in a tone very different from that he uses about the slave trade or widow-burning or dacoity. Those abominations he knew how to handle. For this one he must have Government authority (which he never got). He admits that the offenders had a case. Unless heavily bribed, a concession which would lead to intolerable exactions, natives preferred Indian employers to European. In Delhi City itself, there were probably no more carts and beasts than the City itself could employ in normal conditions; and Europeans, if their practices were stopped, would suffer temporary inconvenience. Nevertheless, given a little time this would adjust itself, and a new and friendly market would be established. Yet, after all his pleading, he falls back in hopelessness and conscious helplessness. All natives in office felt an interest in keeping up the tyranny, and 'almost every European Gentleman thinks it convenient'. The impossibility of suppression was due to the Army being the worst offenders; and 'the zealous assistance of the Military Authorities is not to be expected', unless they saw Government in earnest to put down forced labour.

That part of his work for which he cared least had to do with revenue. Yet he put through the Delhi Land Settlement, a

CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI  
matter too complicated for discussion in detail, except in a committee of experts. I have used such knowledge as I have, and been carefully through Metcalfe's hitherto unexamined letters to Lord William Bentinck, in 1831. These letters, written with vehemence and almost a remorseful tone, convey the impression that he felt he had made some mistakes in his earlier inexperience, and sanctioned others, and was desperately anxious lest his example be used to perpetuate them.

What were these mistakes? We must first remind ourselves of the conditions when Metcalfe, aged twenty-one, undertook the work of establishing a land revenue, on the political bog which the British inherited from the Marathas. 'The first settlements made by a European officer were made by me' (he wrote in 1815) 'under Mr. Seton's instructions, when I was his assistant.' They were faced by 'the reluctance of one part of the people to become responsible for the payment of money rents, and of another part to pay any revenue whatever'. For equipment as revenue officer, Metcalfe brought only the ideas he had picked up in Lord Lake's camp. Common sense and necessity both pointed one way, to a settlement combining lightness with simplicity of collection. He made one that was 'purposely' easy, 'in order to conciliate and encourage the cultivators'. Government did not exact its full dues, but looked to the future.

Until the beginning of this century, Indian Nationalist criticism tended to regard the Bengal Permanent Settlement as the one good thing achieved by the British, and to lament its not having been spread over all India. Metcalfe anticipated the Nationalist criticism of our own day, by coming to denounce it as an unmeasured evil and injustice. He wrote to Lord William Bentinck, April 16, 1831:

'We could not have made the Zemindars of Bengal Proprietors, if we had considered that every Field had its Proprietor—nor could we have allowed whole villages to be sold in the Upper Provinces as the property of one Man, when every village so sold was most probably in that state of property, in

CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI  
which every field had its natural owner, or all the lands were the joint property of the landowners. Your Lordship asks what the Theory is good for, if in practice there is no limit to the demand of the Government. But everywhere there is a limit. There is not a spot, I believe, where the Government Demand is not limited by Law, the Common Law of the Land. The acknowledged demand is everywhere too great, but is still fixed and limited; and the advantage of maintaining the rights of the real proprietors is, that when we can reduce our demand, the benefit will go to the real proprietors, but if we call them Under Tenants and so forth, all the benefit will go to the sham Proprietors, those who are made Proprietors solely by the terms of our Regulations. It seems to me that the Revenue Board in attendance on Your Lordship are disposed to recognize as Proprietors too easily and without sufficient question an intermediate class, who have no right to that character. The worst part of our Regulations is that which ejects Proprietors from their lands for arrears of Revenue. Any severity of distraint is preferable, but moderation is much better. . . .’

It seems to me, however, doubtful if these principles, held and urged so strongly, came to be Metcalfe’s until after long experience. Coming to Delhi when and as they did, he and Seton aimed at settlements for as long a period as possible, beginning with one year followed by three, and then by longer periods. From the five pages which are all that Kaye gives to this whole perplexed question the reader will see that Metcalfe and Seton often repeated the mistake made in Bengal, of giving away to a favoured class what belonged to others. And this, at any rate, seems to emerge from his later writings on the subject, that Metcalfe felt he had sometimes been misled into oversight of claims that were hidden under others that were more obtrusive and powerfully pressed.

Such instances, however, were few; and he was all the time learning, with a patience and disinterested search for absolute truth and fairness rarely equalled. In 1831, he would certainly

CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI  
not have written the first clause of the following statement  
(made in 1815) and would have modified the phrasing of the  
rest:

‘Admitting that the Government has the property of the soil, the question is, as the Government cannot occupy the land, and as the land requires resident proprietors, who are the people that, next to the Government, may be supposed to have the best right? . . . What men can have greater rights than those whose ancestors have occupied the same lands and habitations from time immemorial; who live on the soil entirely, and cultivate at their own expense, and by their own labour; who receive it by hereditary succession or by purchase; who leave it their children or, if reduced by necessity, sell it or mortgage it; or if they choose, transfer it by gift during their lives? These rights are exercised by the Zumeendars, and have been exercised for centuries. If they be not sufficient to constitute undoubted property, they are surely sufficient to confer a paramount claim.’

Notwithstanding numerous revolutions, these rights ‘have generally been held sacred, more sacred, it seems to me, than any other property’. Notwithstanding numerous oppressions, ‘it does not appear that any oppressor, generally speaking, has presumed to interfere with these rights’. He admits that expediency has operated, at least as much as justice, to secure this result; ‘but be the cause what it may, it appears to me that the most clear and most distinct rights held in this part of India are those of the village Zumeendars’.

A careful reading of his argument will show that in it ‘zemin-dars’ means something very different from what it means when we write of Bengal. He means a multitude of comparatively (and often absolutely) small people, who cultivated their lands themselves. He found every village ‘inhabited, wholly or partially, by Zumeendars, or possessory proprietors of the land’. The settlement should have been made with them; but their number was so great, that for convenience’ sake their leaders acted on behalf

CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI  
of each village, agreed to terms, signed engagements, and conducted business. 'The village is bound by their acts. The Mokuddums, having concluded the settlement with the officers of Government, are charged with the duty of collecting the revenue in the village.'

The greatest enemies of this kind of 'zemindars' he found to be 'those writers who, wishing to advocate the rights of private property, applied English ideas and systems to India', and 'classed the cultivators of India, the poor but lawful hereditary possessors of the land, with the laborers of England' (now being rapidly dispossessed, in mid-stream of a century of confiscation and enclosure of the common lands). These writers, and those who supported them in the Indian Government, consigned the poor proprietors' lands 'in absolute property to rich individuals, because the latter seemed calculated to figure in the scheme for the settlement of India in the place of the great land proprietors of England'. 'The actual rights of the village', he asserted, 'seem to be unassailable.' We can see how far the greatest men of Metcalfe's generation were from accepting the complacency of the generation which followed them and carried everywhere the unreasoning conviction that British ways and British systems were right, and thought India should be parcelled out under squires. This division was a convenience to Government, but a gross wrong to the people, and it is thanks to such men as Metcalfe that it never overspread the whole country. There is something to be said for sending men out as young as he and Malcolm and Munro had been; their minds lay open to the thought of the people they were serving and ruling.

To conclude, in 1831 we find Metcalfe urging the Governor-General, then touring up country and liable to influence by men who knew little about India and Indians, not to be put off by the brusqueness and imperiousness of William Fraser—his own right-hand assistant in the settlement of Delhi district, twenty years earlier. Fraser knew more than any other man in India, 'on the important subject of landed tenures, and is capable



CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI of great good, if waywardness did not spoil all';<sup>1</sup> Lord William would like him better if he knew him better. He begs him to listen to Fraser. Then he bursts out irrepressibly. He finds himself 'at issue with the Revenue Authorities at your Head Quarters on some very important points. I am only contending for principles, without establishing which we cannot, I think, act either justly or clearly.' He offers to give a fuller explanation, publicly or privately ('I think I hear you say "God forbid!"'); but sets down his principles now:

'The Government is not Proprietor of the Land, and cannot make Proprietors of the Land. The real Proprietors of the Land are generally Individuals of the Village Communities who are also, for the most part, the natural occupiers and cultivators of the Land. The great Zemindars, Talookdars, &c., whom our Regulation Men recognize as Proprietors, are not so, but Representatives of the Government. We may confer on them as great a portion as we chuse of the Government Rights, but we have no right to give them the property of the land which belongs to others. I believe these principles to be established and acknowledged from Cape Comorin to Cashmere universally, where we do not destroy them—and these form the grounds of my differences, both with your Revenue Board and your Benares Committee.'<sup>2</sup>

That brings us up against the secular argument, as to whether the Indian Land Revenue is rent or tax. There seems no doubt that in Metcalfe's opinion it was a tax. He held increasingly that it was one which operated too heavily; he resembled Munro rather than Malcolm or Elphinstone, becoming more watchful and less complacent as honours and authority came to him, instead of forgetting what his early intimate experience had taught him, the people's crushing poverty. In later years, when—since Vice-President of the Council and (the Governor-General being on tour) Bengal's supreme ruler—we might

<sup>1</sup>It did finally spoil all. He was assassinated, after giving great provocation, in 1835, his assailants, two chieftains, being afterwards hanged.

<sup>2</sup>Letter, March 13, 1831: Bentinck MSS.

## CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI

expect him to have been insulated from facts by the sycophancy which surrounds Indian rulers, we find him insisting that the people were brutally overtaxed and suffered from their Government's ignorance.

He expressed also, at this early date (1815), other principles which in later years he vigorously expressed again, and tried to bring into practice. His *akbari*, or excise, returns were down. This tax was farmed out, and buyers were unwilling to bid highly for it, having formerly overassessed the inhabitants' drinking capacity under the new regime. Metcalfe observes philosophically: 'A diminution in this branch of revenue is not much to be regretted . . . and any decrease of revenue proceeding from a diminution of consumption would be a cause of joy rather than of regret.' Despite this loss, the district's revenues had risen, from four lakhs in 1807-1808, to fifteen lakhs in 1813-1814.

We have always had present with us this interesting phenomenon, of the men of the preceding generation of India's rulers looking from retirement in England with angry disapproval at their successors' bolshevist recklessness. Metcalfe's generation were watched by Warren Hastings, in his old age a tempestuous diehard. He wrote to William Palmer in Calcutta, May 4, 1813, of the dreadful errors about to be introduced by the Company's new Charter. These would lead to the certain loss of India:

'The administration . . . is said to be determined to maintain their resolution of granting a free trade with India to the Outports, and the Company is as determined to refuse the renewal of their Charter with such a participation. . . . In the mean time the mad missionary clamors continue increasing, and I fear their result, though I find an opinion generally prevailing, that they will not take effect.'<sup>1</sup>

His own witness before the Houses of Parliament had been all against these dangerously revolutionary proposals. It was

<sup>1</sup>British Museum MSS., *Warren Hastings General Correspondence*, Vol. LVII, folio 63.

CIVIL AND JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF DELHI  
heard with respect, but rejected. In 1813, India's trade was thrown open to the 'Outports'—that is, to Liverpool, Glasgow, Bristol and other seaside hamlets—and not kept for London only: the Company's Indian trade monopoly also went, that with China being reserved for another twenty years. Unofficial Englishmen might now land in India and proceed to any part, under license which the Company might revoke. A sanctioned influx of planters, indigo planters especially—for some time a very small influx—began. Missionary propaganda became lawful.

Metcalf would have gone much further. Though 'aware that nothing I can say on this subject would have any weight' and that, in expressing any opinion at all, 'I may be deemed guilty of presumption',<sup>1</sup> he recommended 'the free admission' of British settlers, 'and unlimited liberty to acquire property by lawful means, as the surest mode of adding to the resources and increasing the strength of our Asiatic Empire'.

Now, as always, he believed opinion should be left free; and argued also for the diffusion of education. In this, as in his abolition of capital punishment, he would have put India ahead of his own country. His principles were absolute, not relative and chained to the practice of other countries. Some men argued, he knew, that it was dangerous to do what might excite 'a free and independent character', and sedition later. But 'how unworthy it would be of a liberal Government to give weight to such objections! . . . If we perform our duty in this respect, the gratitude of India and the admiration of the world will accompany our name throughout all ages, whatever may be the revolutions of Futurity. But if we withhold blessing from our subjects from a selfish apprehension of possible danger at a remote period, we shall merit that reverse which time has possibly in store for us, and shall fall with the mingled hatred and contempt—the hisses and execrations of mankind.'

<sup>1</sup>It must be remembered that these general observations were hardly expected in a special report on an officer's own administration.

## CHAPTER IX

### POLITICAL DUTIES OF THE RESIDENT

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'You will not be long Resident of Delhi, if you pursue your present course; and I cannot but think that a fair representation of your multifarious and miscellaneous duties would exempt you from all but the intrigues of the Palace and the general political duties, which I do most sincerely believe to be quite sufficient for any one mind that was ever created.'—David Ochterlony to Metcalfe, in 1813.

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Metcalfe's worst embarrassment came from the presence of Majesty in Delhi, the only Majesty which Indian opinion freely acknowledged, despite the Company's success in war. His administration was conducted in the name of Shah Alam's successor, an aged gentleman who had been born a prisoner and had begun his career literally dancing attendant to the ruffian who had blinded his father. When he became King of Delhi, his brain was not of the strongest.

Lord Wellesley's original arrangement with Shah Alam, an informal one, was a *damnosa haereditas* to Seton, and to Metcalfe after him. Its language was explained away as that of 'oriental courtesy'.<sup>1</sup> It was expressed as if the helpless old captive conferred a benefit on the Company by coming under its protection, and it gave him reason to consider himself the acknowledged as well as rightful *titular* head of India. The Company's coinage was in his name, and for thirty years after his death (in 1806) continued so; the Government seems to have entertained a confused notion that it safeguarded its status of independence by using the dead monarch's authority, instead of that of his successors. The

<sup>1</sup>Major E. W. Cunningham's letter to Ellis, Resident at Delhi, September 24, 1831. The letter is included in I.O.R., H.M.S., 708, a file containing the history of thirty years.

## POLITICAL DUTIES OF THE RESIDENT

results of this action, and of many other actions of the same character, did not show fully until the train laid through so many smouldering decades exploded at last in 1857, in the Mutiny. They should have been guessed much earlier. It was all very well to argue, as Cunninghame did to Ellis and Metcalfe in 1831, that the King's rank in 1805 'you must perceive was merely given as a plaything'. Against this, 'it must be confessed there was a laxity in the early stages of his being under our protection that has been the Basis of all the intrigue and misconception'.

There was a laxity also, as regards his allowances. Lord Wellesley apportioned him a stipend of Rs.90,000 a month, plus seven separate gifts of Rs.10,000 on great festivals. This was recognised as being on the close side; and Ochterlony, the first Resident, recommended a total grant of one lakh monthly to the Emperor (whom from now on we shall call the King), the festival *nazars* to be additional; and Rs.30,000 a month to the Heir Apparent. The King had given up *jagirs* that brought in Rs.24,000 a month, which were styled 'the Crown lands'. These lands were specially involved under the obscure terms of Wellesley's original settlement, which promised the King an increase of a lakh a month, if the improvement of the revenue—particularly that derived from 'the Crown lands'—permitted. This clause, it was believed, had not been communicated to the King, but kept a secret understanding among the British themselves. Cunninghame, however, who knew most about the matter, and therefore summed it up when Rammohan Roy went as the King's representative to England in 1831, says this belief was mistaken. The Royal Family *did* know of this promise, which was construed as having been a much larger promise—one of a *proportionate* increase of stipend, as the revenue increased. The stipend itself was given a name that dignified it greatly, and soothed the feelings of fallen royalty: 'the charity of the Government is named Tribute'.

Nothing of this mattered while Shah Alam lingered out his few remaining days. Under Sindhia's tutelage he had been treated kindly. But Sindhia—and, still more, the Frenchmen

## POLITICAL DUTIES OF THE RESIDENT

stationed in Delhi, to whom the Ganges-Jumna *doab* had been assigned for support—had always been in financial difficulties. The French commander's practice was to pay first himself and his men, and the King last. Sindhia's original generous provision of Rs. 130,000 a month soon dwindled to under Rs. 16,000, doled out to individuals by a French official, and often six months in arrears. No member of the Royal Family, other than the King himself, ever received above twenty or twenty-five rupees a month.

Shah Alam, too shaken with suffering and sorrows to care, and happy to be in harbour at last, under British protection, was quiet and uncomplaining, probably even grateful. According to high native authority, 'discontent never emanated from the poor old King'. But when Akbar succeeded, in 1806, everything changed. Delhi became the focus of all the Moslem discontent in India, and indeed, of most of the Hindu discontent also. 'No City in India, I believe', wrote Ochterlony in 1820, 'contains so many people disposed to dabble in political Intrigue and no one has more correspondence' (than the Resident) 'on Subjects strictly political'.<sup>1</sup> When Shah Alam died, the Palace intriguers were vexed 'to be shorn of a power that at first they had been improperly allowed to misuse'.<sup>2</sup> The King's favourite wife from behind a purdah scolded the patient obsequious Seton. He was told that his kindness 'was simply the duty of a servant to his master: all faith had been broken with the King, who alone permitted the Company to Remain in Hindostan on their faithful promise given to assist him to Recover his Dominions. . . . Where nonsense of this kind was believed you may suppose the intrigue that was going on.' She persuaded her husband to demand back despotic power. One of his Hindu creditors offered him, if he recovered it, three lakhs a month for right to farm the revenues, and to surrender jewels he possessed in pledge. 'That veteran in intrigue, the Sombroo Begum', supported the King's assertion

<sup>1</sup>Parasnis Historical Museum, Satara: MSS. records.

<sup>2</sup>Cunninghame.

## POLITICAL DUTIES OF THE RESIDENT

that he was entitled (as by Indian notions he was) to appoint his successor, which successor the ruling wife was determined should be her son, Mirza Jahangir, in place of an elder son by another wife. Seton's almost infinite forbearance at last gave way so far as to banish Mirza Jahangir to Allahabad, where he behaved so well that he was presently allowed to return, to become again the centre of intrigue.

All this later (in 1831) appeared presumption, 'from a man who had the Balls of a dancing boy taken off his legs' (by Sindhia), and had been raised from indigence to dignity. 'The better class of native constantly talked' (to Seton and Metcalfe) of the thankless conduct of the Palace. The King 'must be fed on owls' to be so blind to his interests as to conspire against his generous protectors. If his power were given back, the wealthier Indians said they would leave Delhi; his administration would prove 'worse than a Mahratta Government'. But men and women are nowhere controlled by practical considerations only. Sentiment stayed faithful to the decayed monarchy, at whose Court native states all had vakils. Titles and insignia deriving from its grant were valued, while those given by the Company were despised. Even the Begum Sumroo, the astutest brain in India, for a grant of lands to her adopted daughter's husband paid the King Rs.40,000 (of which Rs.23,000 were kept by the King's creditor who arranged the transaction). To ensure validity, the Begum, who never did things by halves, employed an artist to forge Metcalfe's counter-signature, by which means the estates were actually occupied for six months, before Metcalfe discovered the kindness that had saved him the trouble of seeing to the affair himself.

The Company gave every appearance of sharing the general opinion, and paid a high price for the King's support and sanction. Individual officers stationed at Delhi often fell under the prevalent spell, and by their practice would recall the old imperial atmosphere, after periods when obeisance had relaxed. Metcalfe was all for realism, for letting the King by degrees sub-

## POLITICAL DUTIES OF THE RESIDENT

side into an ordinary nobleman. But some of his successors thought differently, and in later years he frequently found himself angrily defending his own former attitude. He was generally believed to have treated the King with arrogance and harshness.

It must be emphasised that the Royal Family's misery was extreme. The Palace was a city in itself, of nearly three miles' circumference. The Jumna, as a partial moat, and giant bastions and rampart and a wall which could nowhere be overlooked encircled a swarm of mud huts in which lived several generations—all who were linked with the King by kindred or marriage—life-prisoners, their 'only crime being allied to Royalty'.<sup>1</sup> If the gates opened to admit the Resident, these starving creatures would rush madly at him, and mob him for the gift of a rupee or two. Government efforts to help them were useless. The only alleviation of penury was a few blankets distributed in the cold weather, nominally from the King, 'but in fact a private charity of Seton's'. This distress, joined to the ignorance and vehemence of the women of the inner and higher circles of the Palace, and to his own infirmities and discontents, made the King an easy victim of intrigues. He resented most of all his poverty, and that the *akbari* or excise department, an elastic and readily extended source of revenue, had been taken from him.

At the outset of Metcalfe's rule, some of the ablest and most enterprising of the King's advisers formed what was afterwards known as 'Prawn Kishen's Mission'. Prankrishna, a Hindu, and a Muslim colleague persuaded the King to send them as his vakils to Calcutta. A friendly moulvi remained behind, to delight their master with their reports of astounding success. They had called on 'Lord Russell' (Sir Henry Russell, the Chief Justice), who 'wrung his hands with grief' on hearing of Metcalfe's cruel behaviour and spoke to the Governor-General. The Governor-General had written a letter of severe rebuke to 'the Nizam',<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Cunninghame.

<sup>2</sup>'Regulator'. Metcalfe is so styled because theoretically he was the King's Minister.



## POLITICAL DUTIES OF THE RESIDENT

warning him to mend his ways. 'I have sent you that you should honour His Majesty, not that you should distress him. If another time I hear of your offending His Majesty, you may expect to be punished.' His Majesty was to set his mind at rest: his Nizam was about to be recalled, Mirza Jahangir appointed heir, 'and the other matters also will be easily accomplished'. An even more interesting and equally veracious story followed. Mr. Elphinstone, Resident at Poona, had been arrested for pro-French proclivities and sent to London a prisoner. 'There before the King he said, "I am in no fault, but have been accused through spite because when in Delhi I reviled Mr. Seton on account of his disrespect to the royal family."' He had been immediately acquitted with high commendation. The Governor-General was now going to England, taking Seton with him—this was a skilful variation upon the known fact that these two were actually sailing from Calcutta (but for Java, not London); 'Lord Russell' had ordered His Majesty's Mission to go also, and the whole controversy would be tried by the King of England in person. 'So, God willing, off we go to London, by the way of Bombay.' They asked for an increase of allowances, which was obtained; and their moulvi confederate assured their master that his vakils had actually sailed.

The Company's 'Politicals' were states in themselves, with their espionage everywhere, agents and news-writers at other Courts. Metcalfe received copies of the letters of Prankrishna's Mission, and interviewed the King and advised him 'to relinquish that torment of his life, the worrying desire to effect impracticable changes'. He had been put where he was going to stay. His Resident recommended him to accept this fact, for his peace of mind's sake.

The King expressing complete repentance and conviction, Metcalfe relegated the Palace's expectations and disappointments to a secondary place. They nevertheless continued to impinge on him in practical and vexatious fashion, owing to the fact that he was (as I have said) conducting what was in theory the King's administration. The Palace wished to continue the lucrative

## POLITICAL DUTIES OF THE RESIDENT

slave-trade, and no doubt had a legal case against 'the Nizam'. Gruesome tales filtered out from the gigantic fastness. He heard of female infanticide by the royal ladies, and the alleged murder of an old woman by the young bloods. The latter, restive under confinement and indigence, developed a kind of local banditry, oiling their bodies and rushing naked into the women's apartments, flourishing drawn swords, and looting the inmates. It undermined Metcalfe's jurisdiction, that these conditions had such preposterous foundations in law. He increasingly shut his eyes to the Palace's existence, except when he opened them compulsorily on ceremonial occasions; and as far as possible he insulated his work from the possibility of being wrecked by this troublesome element at its very centre.

I turn to the states at Metcalfe's doors. Twenty-three of these (counting 'the Plunderers') touched his territory, and the entire political department was in his sole hands.

These were the years when Rajputana's long-drawn-out suffering was coming to its climax of sharpest agony and helplessness. The Marathas had been broken in war, and driven in on Central India, where the petty Rajput kingdoms and a few others—of which Bhopal was the first to be rescued, in 1814—were quite explicitly flung to them. The prey was insufficient, for such hordes of freelances as were now here concentrated without regular employment or any pay. The disorder deepened, the confusion grew wilder. Sindhia kept some sort of appearance of government, but Holkar's power, which had never been particularly coherent, seemed to be disintegrating. The Prince was a minor, and Amir Khan and Muhammad Shah Khan, operating with organised armies, ranged widely, from bases inside what were considered his territories.

Metcalfe told his own Government, June 20, 1811: 'It is impossible to live in this part of India, and to see the scenes which pass before our eyes', and not long that the Company should take these regions under its protection. He urged the advantages of

## POLITICAL DUTIES OF THE RESIDENT

such a course. It would connect the Bengal and Bombay Presidencies. It would deprive 'the vagabond armies'—and except the British, there were hardly any other armies in India now—of their chief resource, and would bring about peace. It would separate the Company's northern and southern enemies—by which he means Ranjit Singh and the Marathas—and would secure it against them both, giving as allies and neighbours 'Princes by nature and habit contented with their own Countries, free from the spirit of aggression and encroachment, and delighting in the arts of Peace and agriculture'. The Rajput states would cover British frontiers if a war broke out with a power to the north-west and would throw the disturbing and damaging business of fighting to a convenient distance. If such a war broke out now, the frontiers would be exposed.

Metcalf owns there are difficulties. Existing treaties would have to be scrapped, there might be serious campaigning, and it would probably end in the British taking control of all India. Even so, 'If the Government could be tempted to deviate from its usual policy, and to extend its political relations for the sake of the tranquillity of India, by a general call of the Inhabitants of Hindostan for its protection, that call may be said to be loud in all the peaceable states, universally, from the Rajahs down to the Ryots'. He found it hard to get anyone to confess that the Government was behaving justly. 'People do not scruple to assert that they have a right to the protection of the British Government. They say that there always has existed some Power in India, to which peaceable states submitted, and in return obtained its protection.' The Company were shamefully declining their plain obligations.

Bharatpur, which had carried itself proudly ever since it repulsed Lake's assaults, did much to try Metcalfe's patience. In 1813, its Raja refused to let his accredited Resident live at his Court or exercise his functions, 'or even to enter the walls of the capital without special permission and a special guard', keeping him encamped on the plain outside. Moreover, Bharatpur levied

## POLITICAL DUTIES OF THE RESIDENT

irregular war along the frontier of the Delhi enclave, 'though warned that a continuance of such insulting conduct must inevitably give offence to the British Government.' Metcalfe in a *Minute* wryly animadverted on the inconsistency of his Government's treatment of this Prince and of another, the Raja of Jaipur, who was in extremity of distress and begging to be taken into protection:

'We formed alliances about the same period with the states of Bhurtpore and Jyepore. Both states on the same occasion were false to their alliances, but in different degrees. Bhurtpore joined and fought with our enemy Holkar. Jyepore only hesitated to fulfil its engagements with us. The one which committed the most venial fault has suffered; the other, which sinned against us more heinously, has been befriended. With Jyepore we kept on terms during the war with Holkar, and made use of its troops against him; but after the war we abandoned it to its fate, and the country has since been overrun. . . . Bhurtpore we had to fight as the ally of Holkar, and we have ever since protected it against all enemies. Jyepore has been sinking every day since we dissolved the alliance with that state, and is now nearly annihilated. Bhurtpore has been growing in wealth, power, and consequence under our protection. Jyepore is now at our feet begging for protection and alliance. Bhurtpore refuses to admit our agent to reside at his Court.'

In his indignation, Metcalfe proposed the dissolution of the alliance with Bharatpur, and—not a regular siege, for he held strong views on the Company's inadequacy, as shown on previous occasions, in such sieges, but—a rush with overwhelming force. The Government, however, had just concluded its extensive war of conquest in the East Indies and the Mauritius, and finance was again looming up as the wall which forbade further campaigning. As a personal sop to Metcalfe, Bharatpur was ordered to withdraw his vakil from Delhi (while still keeping one at Calcutta). Seton wrote his former subordinate a soothing letter:

## POLITICAL DUTIES OF THE RESIDENT

'How sadly you have been annoyed by that weak, ungrateful man, the Rajah of Bhurtpore! We may say with truth, "If we could, we would!" He has given us repeated cause of offence; and did the state of our army and our finances (now very low) admit of our meeting the probable consequences of an open rupture, we would of course hold very plain language. But as that is now out of the question, we must avoid showing our teeth. We must, whilst we evince to him that we are dissatisfied . . . take care not to appear too angry. . . . We must, while manifesting our displeasure, preserve our tranquillity; and to borrow an expression from the *Agreeable Surprise*, take care "not to give him room to suppose his Serene Highness (the Governor-General) is in a passion".'

So, since the Raja 'will not agree to receive an accredited agent from you, it is but fair that you should dismiss his agent'. This adroit settlement gave little joy to Metcalfe.

The day of reckoning with Bharatpur must wait, therefore; when it came, it found Metcalfe grimly ready. His most immediate business was with Jaipur. He reported, June 20, 1811, that Amir Khan had just left its territory, on a promise of receiving 10 or 16 lakhs, rumour was not quite sure which. Amir Khan being nominally a servant of Holkar's Government, Jaipur was asking the latter to give it a receipt in full, before paying up. Holkar's Government, anxious to get some of the ransom for itself, had for long been withholding the receipt, but at last had yielded to Amir Khan's pressure and given it. Jaipur, probably because it could not, had not yet paid. Metcalfe derisively observed that Amir Khan was in bonds to his own disorderly followers, who had put him on a hunger diet and were daily exposing him to the hottest of the sun for hours. 'It affords a very striking proof of the weakness of the Jypoor Government, when such an army in such a state could make it tremble for its existence.'

Another Muhammadan captain of free companies, Muhammad Shah Khan, was operating close to Delhi. All parties were

## POLITICAL DUTIES OF THE RESIDENT

pestering Metcalfe for help, or sanction, or at any rate advice. 'It is with difficulty that I can persuade them it is no concern of mine.' Amir Khan and Muhammad Shah Khan, in the friendliest manner possible, invited him to indicate what Princes they were free to attack. Metcalfe replied that it would be unkind on his part to direct their attacks against people with whom the Company had no quarrel. Also (with the lightning gleam of a warning, behind the cloudy vagueness of diplomatic talk), he pointed out that the British Government's interference or neutrality would depend on circumstances affecting its own interests, 'of which Government would judge at the time of their occurrence'. Muhammad Shah Khan's vakil, good-naturedly accepting this, asked, What about Nagpur? The Company had no alliance with its Raja. Why, then, this unwillingness to let him be eaten up? Metcalfe explained that they could not sanction the overthrow 'of an antient state, our neighbour and friend'; they had interposed 'amicable mediation' to prevent confusion. He thought this 'a useful hint' concerning Jaipur also. The vakil, still seeking enlightenment, in the course of this very friendly conversation asked to have his master and his brigade taken into Company service. This offer being civilly declined, leave was asked to attack Sind, with a guarantee that Bombay would not interfere. Metcalfe was again not helping any.

Amir Khan's vakil, meanwhile, was asking that his master might be given a principality in Rohilkhand, and he and his troops employed to make new conquests for the Company. Metcalfe answered that the Company were not disposed to make conquests or to give away their possessions, and that he did not admit that Amir Khan had any claims on their generosity. All this was, he reported, an affable diplomatic exploration of possibilities, to find some common ground. There was nothing fresh in these discussions, he concluded wearily; he deemed it his duty to notice them, for the information of Government—that was all.

Jaipur was willing to pay its danegeld, if inevitable, but wanted

## POLITICAL DUTIES OF THE RESIDENT

security that Amir Khan's depredations would cease. Its Raja asked for a treaty guaranteed by the Company, by which he should pay fixed tribute to Holkar (Amir Khan's nominal superior), the tribute to be passed on by the guarantor. Better still, he said, would be straightforward protection against his despoilers. No fighting would be necessary: a mere declaration would 'do wonders'.

Metcalfé hesitated, foreseeing considerable trouble over any measure which, 'by excluding the Marattas from the Harvest of Jypoor, would deprive them of one of their principal means of obtaining bread'. He acted, however, when the Raja of Macheri, a small chieftain dependent on the Company, and the truculent Raja of Bharatpur's near neighbour, took a hand in the pillage of Jaipur (1812), seizing some territory. The Raja ignored remonstrances, and then returned only some of his loot, accompanying this partial reparation with a request that Fraser be sent to see him. Metcalfé refused, but afterwards thought he had made a mistake, as Fraser's energy and great ability would have probably beaten down the Raja's obstinacy. The Company's policy, in its queer look of weakness and its many illogicalities, genuinely puzzled these bantam Alexanders who abounded in Central India. Relations remained friendly; but Macheri's Raja held on to his annexations. Metcalfé therefore decided that he should be given over to Satan, until he had learnt not to blaspheme. Amir Khan and Muhammad Shah Khan were prowling near his borders; his protection by the British should be suspended 'until he becomes aware of its importance for his prosperity and safety'. This did not bring him to order, so Metcalfé sent strong representations (June 25, 1813) to his Government, to which Jaipur also appealed; he wrote the Raja a letter which shows his own sense of impotence, in the Company's reluctance to engage in forcible measures, but concludes with vigorous warning that offenders could not count on going always unpunished. Then, in October 1813, a new Governor-General took over, Lord Moira, who (Adam told Metcalfé)

## POLITICAL DUTIES OF THE RESIDENT

‘entered fully and cordially into the spirit and tendency of your reasoning, and is disposed to go the full length of all your views’.<sup>1</sup> Metcalfe was therefore authorised to reduce Macheri to unconditional submission. A sufficient force marched upon its capital, and when it was within seven miles the Raja gave way. His little burst of independence cost him 3 lakhs.

Metcalfe’s spies sent in their tidings. His own court in turn was duly studied. Among the Poona MSS., lying in large *roomals* (handkerchiefs), are Persian reports of his daily actions, made for the last Peshwa. We can recreate the great satrap’s hours, almost his gestures. He is occupied with reading and writing (December 10, 1811):<sup>2</sup> receives *nazars*: sends the King greetings: goes for a solitary walk, and returns to his evening meal and to long silent studying. He sees to the treasury’s incomings. He pays out monthly salaries. He learns that two European gentlemen are lodged in an inn, and sends an elephant for them. It is the King’s Accession Anniversary, and ‘Muntazim-ud-Daula’<sup>3</sup> accompanied by his ‘sirdars’ goes to offer his own *nazars*. He declines an invitation to share in the Holi revels, as they are not ‘our festival’. Amir Khan’s vakil comes, and they are privately together. A wolf comes to the City gates and kills some children. A horse kicks a man, and Muntazim-ud-Daula sends it to *hazut* (jail) till its owner is discovered. He is in his office until noon, and then, hearing that his kitchen has been on fire, sends his brother to see about it. He goes to the criminal court, and dismisses and sends to prison a police officer who has taken a Rs.500 bribe. A clerk accused of a minor misdemeanour is heard, then fined Rs.6 and sacked. A zemindar under life sentence is sent in by William Fraser, and Muntazim-ud-Daula pardons him but makes him give surety.

The story of each crowded day ends with the statement that he went to the Shalimar Gardens, and changed his clothes, and

<sup>1</sup>November 15, 1813.

<sup>2</sup>But there is no point in giving dates of all these selected items.

<sup>3</sup>‘Administrator of the State.’



## POLITICAL DUTIES OF THE RESIDENT

was private there. These gardens, now a tangle of citrus trees and palms and plantains, with a wild undergrowth of jungle round matted snake-infested ponds—a lovely wilderness haunted by screaming paroquets and peacocks and kingfishers—have their place in history because it was here that Aurangzeb proclaimed himself Emperor. They lie about six miles out of Delhi. They were Metcalfe's home, where he and his Indian wife lived retired. Evening by evening he bowled along the dusty road to this retreat, and forgot the seething City where Aurangzeb's line and the Mogul glory were taking so unconscionable a time in dying.

One sentence the unknown spy writes down repeatedly. Someone comes up, with some report or complaint, and—'Muntazim-ud-Daula heard and remained silent'. It calls up a whole life, as if in some unforgettable vignette; and survives when all else has gone into shadow and murmur.

## CHAPTER X

### THE GURKHA WAR

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'I rejoice at this partial abandonment of the non-interference system. But I want to see it openly renounced as absurd and impracticable in our present situation. Let our policy be guided by justice and moderation, but let us take every fair opportunity of securing and aggrandising our power.'—Metcalf to Richard Jenkins, November 3, 1814.

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**T**he Gurkha War of 1814–1816 proved unexpectedly unsuccessful. No one was more shaken by the run of defeats than Metcalfe, who produced, hurriedly and in much heat—'under a conviction, probably erroneous, but working powerfully in my mind'—a memorandum which he forwarded to Lord Hastings (then touring and not far off) 'with some trepidation, because I am not sure that his Lordship will approve of my intruding my thoughts on his notice, on a subject not perhaps within the bounds of my official duty'.

The memorandum has almost more personal interest than political, for it shows plainly how his misgivings were rooted in his experience. He considered it axiomatic that the Company's power rested solely on military prowess. This prowess had been roughly handled, as at Bharatpur, a failure which he remembered so well. He analyses the reasons for that failure, and points out that they had been so little laid to heart that the same errors were being repeated. He already knew enough to be aware that in the Gurkhas the Company had met such an opposition as India had not previously produced; and he brushes aside as irrelevant former instances of successful assault—of what were merely 'large villages without guns' or places insignificantly defended—in the popgun warfare with tiny chieftains which was all that had taken

## THE GURKHA WAR

place in Lord Minto's time. He dismissed the braggart talk of what the British were going to do presently, and begged that the time-honoured method of generalship, the frontal attack, should be reinforced by artillery reduction before men were asked to risk their lives. 'Decided effects have occasionally been accomplished by shelling' (he gives instances, from an experience of war that for a civilian had certainly been extensive). 'The writer of these remarks' (whose revolutionary appearance to the military mind he well understood) 'has his mind often occupied by these subjects.' Also, an increase in the army was essential. 'Our power in India rests on our military superiority. It has no foundation in the affections of our subjects.'

He burned with zest to increase British territory as wisely and rapidly as possible. The war brought one of the busiest periods of his life; and at its outset he had the pleasure of being instrumental in bringing two princes, the Nawab of Bhopal and the Chief of Sagar, within the Company's sphere. Bhopal had been in friendly relations ever since Warren Hastings's time, but after Barlow's withdrawal behind the line of the Jumna it had existed hardly even nominally, long overrun by predatory warfare. Its Nawab was in trouble with his Wazir, so Sindhia and the Bhonsla Raja sent a force to his assistance, under the former's general, Jean Baptiste. This disinterested friendship seemed likely to help the Nawab out of the last shreds of his authority; he appealed desperately to Metcalfe, who wrote his Government a series of urgent letters, between October, 1814 and January, 1815. Lord Hastings, prompted by the ever-faithful Adam, responded immediately, and informed the Delhi Resident (October 17), that he was to tell the Bhonsla Raja that 'I have listened to the entreaty of the Nabob of Bhopaul and of the Chieftain of Saugor to be allowed to attach themselves to the Honble. Company's Government'. Knowing that the Bhonsla Raja was eager to reconquer lands which the Nawab had taken from him, the Governor-General (a master of meiosis) feared 'that this intimation may be for the instant painful'. However, when His

## THE GURKHA WAR

Highness reflected that British troops in Bhopal would strengthen his frontiers against Pindari incursions, he would be consoled and even delighted. 'It is only with regard to an illusory object that he can feel disappointed.' He was to be assured by Metcalfe that the Governor-General's desire to promote 'his essential Interests' was equal to his 'Personal Regard' for him.

Metcalfe played his part skilfully. He told Bhopal's moulvi that the Company would take his master under protection. The moulvi answered that the Nawab would be glad of protection 'on any terms'; but, having no authority himself to conclude a treaty, he asked to be allowed to take back the conditions that would be attached to one. Instructing him to tell his master to send an envoy with complete powers, Metcalfe flaunted an elaborate nonchalance over the whole business: 'It did not appear to be either necessary or useful to evince any anxiety on the Subject.' This manner was at variance with his real feelings, for in the same letter he says that he had pressed the moulvi, in view of the urgency of his master's case, to procure that an envoy be sent at once to Wauchope, the British Resident in Bundelkhand, the nearest point to Bhopal, to sign a treaty. If delayed much longer, there might be no Bhopal to protect! He cautioned the moulvi to go back with extreme secrecy, lest his errand be suspected and trouble to himself ensue on the way. The next move, he observes, lay with Bhopal.<sup>1</sup>

The moulvi reported the Nawab's joy at hearing he was going to be saved, evinced by the gratifying ceremonies which had greeted the bearer of this tidings. Metcalfe referred the matter (March, 1815) for final settlement to Wauchope, who drew up the first draft of what became a formal treaty when the general pacification took place three years later. That pacification had its beginnings now, in this action and the concurrent action by which Saugor also was taken under British protection. The Company's motive was mainly geographical considerations; they gained an extension of dependent territory linking the

<sup>1</sup>Metcalfe to Adam, October 21, 1814.

## THE GURKHA WAR

Jumna and Narbada. The Pindaris lost in Bhopal an important base and source of supplies, and became aware of shadows starting to oversweep their sky, and that all was no longer well in their India. Karim Khan, one of their most renowned leaders, forwarded (November, 1814) through Richard Strachey, Sindhia's Resident, an application to Metcalfe to be taken into British service and given a *jagir*. It is hard to see why this application went to Metcalfe, except that by his presence at Delhi he acquired for his own position some of the glamour which attached to the accepted capital of All India. Metcalfe sent the application on to Adam, to be decently interred in the proper fashion.

Lord Hastings was presently near enough to Delhi to raise the question of sending the King 'a deputation of compliments', headed by Adam. Metcalfe's advice was sought, 'on the propriety and expediency of the thing generally', and on the ceremonial proper to the occasion. He reported that the King refused a basis of equality and was determined to use a meeting to obtain public recognition of his suzerainty. Learning this, Lord Hastings dismissed the whole project with characteristic laconism. 'Have the goodness', Adam told Metcalfe, 'with your accustomed diplomatic ability, to reconcile the King to the impracticability of a meeting.'

Metcalfe, bidden to the Governor-General's camp at Moradabad, reached it in the last week of November, 1814. He was a great man, admitted to be such all over India. The circumstances which had kept him at the ends of British territory, as so many different potentates in his own distinguished person—Warden of the Marches, with only his close friend Ochterlony out further, in the wilderness itself: overseer of the King of Delhi: Ranjit Singh's match and master: Political in control of a web of diplomacy and intrigue in which a score of secondary kings were entangled—all this had made him in his lifetime a legendary character. And in Lord Hastings's camp everyone in key positions was his personal friend and admirer. The Howe Boys were ruling India. Masterfulness, like ambition, grows by what it feeds

## THE GURKHA WAR

on: the man who had during anxious months watched and followed Ranjit Singh, and checked every move until at last he mated him—whose ordinary routine entailed such duties as dismissal of ambassadors with firm kind advice or rebuking the descendant of Emperors—this man took his place, as by natural right, in the tent where decisions were made, an unofficial cabinet minister and at one step the most influential of all.

For one thing, he was a mine of information. Here was the Company caught in a war which was going badly, and he alone could tell them what other surprises fate might be preparing. What did Indian opinion think of the Kalunga rout, and of other routs even more disturbing? Was Ranjit Singh likely to break his appointed bounds, like the Old Dragon of the Apocalypse, and appear this side of the Satlej, making common ground with the triumphing Gurkhas? What about Shah Suja, the exiled King of Kabul, who had begun that long haunting of British rulers and British encampments which was to result, twenty-five years later, in his dragging us into the First Afghan War? Was it worth while making any agreement with him? Had he any power? Was he likely to get back? What about 'cleaning up' Bharatpur, now that British forces were so handy for doing the job? What about the Government taking over the King of Delhi's function of granting titles? What about fortifications, and the defence of British India generally?

Kaye remarks, that not only was Lord Hastings having trouble with so many wars in being or brewing in India, but with 'the Pindarrees of Leadenhall-street' also, who were assailing his rear 'with their restrictions and retrenchments'.<sup>1</sup> These strange people, even after more than half a century of financial embarrassment because of extensive campaigns, were not yet reconciled to the prospect of more debts, and yet more debts, piling up on top of their already heavy commitments. Kaye thinks it still queerer that Edmonstone, left behind in Calcutta as Vice-President of the Council, officiating there in Lord Hastings'

<sup>1</sup>*Life of Metcalfe*, i, 399.

## THE GURKHA WAR

absence, had gone over to the Pindaris in London, and was worried by expense, Seton and Dowdeswell, the other Members of Council, concurring with him. The Governor-General was alone in his own administration; and he was far from his base.

The position was to be almost ludicrously repeated, fifteen years later, when Metcalfe himself was left behind as Vice-President, with Lord William Bentinck, the President, up country as 'prancing proconsul'. Metcalfe then harassed his superior with injunctions to economy—with prayers and pleadings, almost commands, not to be misled by showy durbars and ostentatious princelings, not to seek to outdo them all and perhaps even plunge into ambitious schemes of territorial aggrandisement. That was yet in the future, however, in 1814; and it was a very different Metcalfe who gave the Governor-General guidance like that of the false prophet to Ahab, to go up and smite the Assyrians—all the Assyrians he could find—and hang the expense. The men in Calcutta—Seton, Edmonstone, Dowdeswell—were all good friends of his, and all good men. But they were cautious, they lacked vision. They did not look to the ultimate end, to what would be for India's final prosperity. They fussed too much about meeting the Company's present bills.

Metcalfe accordingly wrote his *Minute* of December, 1814, which was put into the Governor-General's hands in January. It mirrors his intense excitement:

'There is Runjeet Singh looking eagerly on from the north-west. There is Meer Khan within a few marches of the Delhi and Agra frontiers. There are Scindiah and the Raja of Nagpore settling whether they shall attack us or not, and thus virtually menacing our frontier from Agra down to Kuttack. There are the Pindarrees ready to pour themselves into every defenceless country. . . . When our numerous enemies see us entangled and embarrassed in an unsuccessful war, it is hardly to be expected that they will refrain from taking advantage of such a favourable opportunity, unless they be overawed by suitable arrangements and proportionate exertions on our part.'

## THE GURKHA WAR

He outlined a plan for the general settlement of Central India, which was substantially that which Lord Hastings carried through, three years later. It contained his famous division of the existing states under three heads: 'Substantive states, ardently desiring our overthrow': 'Military powers not substantive states, but more dangerous, perhaps, than these states . . . living by plunder and devastation', and equally hostile: 'Petty states . . . subject to the continual plunder and oppression of the two former classes' and seeking British protection. Before these restless elements could be fitted into some ordered polity, the Pindaris must be extirpated. And those semi-Pindaris, Amir Khan and Muhammad Khan, must be disposed of, either by destruction or by giving them a provision and disbanding their troops—an alternative which is very interesting. It shows that he had done a deal of thinking over these chiefs' representations to him, their requests to be recognised as regular princes and given small kingdoms of their own. This would have happened long ago, but for the presence of the British; and they were obviously growing tired of decades of warfare. They had sold their wild oats, and wished to become reasonably good potentates, founding dynasties. Metcalfe had seen their point, and considered it well taken. In this, as in every detail of this amazing memorandum, his advice was exactly followed.

He glanced at existing treaties. Some expressly bound the Government not to form alliances with the Rajput states, which were explicitly in the 'sphere of influence' of Sindhia or Holkar. Metcalfe thought more particularly of Jaipur, which had been metaphorically sitting like Lazarus at his gate for so long, asking for a few crumbs of protection—a mere declaration, if nothing else. He thought that the treaties which fettered the Company's action should be abrogated and the petty states taken over. This 'would confine the military and predatory powers of India within narrow limits. They must then either devour each other, or waste away, or attack us.' We must therefore have made ourselves strong enough to annex them all, when 'by one great ex-



## THE GURKHA WAR

ertyon the tranquillity of India might be established on a permanent footing, and our supremacy would be complete'.

This brings him—and not too soon, his grandiose plans were transporting him so far and wildly—to the problem of finance. Government's 'main object', in all its acts, should be to have the most efficient army possible, for every possible call on it, inside or outside British borders. If resources were inadequate, we ought not 'to cripple our strength' by trying to reduce the army to the financial cloth available for such a coat, but to raise our resources. The best way of doing this was by enlarging the Company's territories 'on every occasion of war, as much as possible, consistently with justice and policy, moderation to our enemies, and due attention to our allies'. The 'net revenues of conquered countries' should go into 'the maintenance of additional force', and that force should be used for 'the achievement of new conquests', to provide new force in their turn. As he cheerfully observes elsewhere, all this can happen, without any breach of ethics. 'There is no doubt that opportunities will arise for effecting such conquests, for with the utmost moderation and justice on our part, misunderstandings and wars in the course of time will be occasionally unavoidable.'

Finance, finance, finance! It was monstrous that this stale cry should be holding up projects so attractive!

'The error seems to belong to the Government at home, which has been resolved to make everything bend to a desire to keep down the expenses—as if our expenses could be regulated at our pleasure! as if we could control events so as to render them subservient to economical and commercial views!'

'Reverse the system of Government,' Metcalfe cries; 'make views of economy and retrenchment secondary to those of safety and power. Let us first adopt measures for the security and strength of our dominion, and afterwards look to a surplus of revenue!' Retrench, if you must, but not in the army. 'Let us cherish our military establishments above all others, for on them our power entirely depends!'

## THE GURKHA WAR

A man intoxicated is recognised as legally, but not altogether morally, responsible for what he does or says. Metcalfe, with the heady wine that he was using to debauch himself, sank to argument which surely must have appalled him if he ever read it over again, in the sobriety of later life. He admits that 'resources are not always procurable at will'. But, given a ruthless grip on power and a driving sternness, they can always be got by those who rule.

'When additional resources become necessary, they must be raised, and means must be had recourse to which in ordinary times might be deemed objectionable. There ought to be, and surely must be, ways and means of raising additional revenue from the vast territories under our dominion. A native Government . . . would extract much more from the extensive empire which we possess without injuring the prosperity of the country. For instance, a duty on the transport of grain would be levied by a native Government, and would probably be exceedingly productive. The proposal will no doubt be objected to. It is not agreeable to European prejudices; but a duty on traffic in grain—the principal trade of most parts of the country—is a source of revenue under every native Government, and, whether a good or bad source of revenue, it is the only one which promises to be abundantly productive.'

It is true that in the words which immediately follow he shows some sense of shame at what he is suggesting. But what is important is that under the excitement of his wildly expansionist mood he was willing to forget the people's poverty and to apply no more stringent test than the one of conforming to custom, the custom of the appalling governments then functioning in India. These governments put their hand into the scanty grain ration of a starving people. Well, then, he argues, let us do likewise, and augment our vast efficient armies.

'Any acquisition of territory in the centre of India would contract the extent of frontier to be defended, or approximate the connections between the forces of Bengal and those of the other Presidencies, or give a surplus of revenue available for

## THE GURKHA WAR

the payment of a military force, without the chance of involving us in any embarrassments beyond those to which we are already exposed. So far, therefore, from contemplating an increase of territory as an evil to be avoided, we ought to desire it, wherever it can be justly obtained, as the source of safety and power.'

This strain appealed to the Governor-General, and his thoughts began to turn towards taking the writer away from Delhi. He needed such an epistolary spearman, to make good the deficiencies in his own defence, occasioned by his ignorance of conditions and the desultory streak in character which made him unwilling to bestir himself too zealously. He was also an old man, in a country where everyone else was young.

This proposal came later. What should be noted now is that Metcalfe unwittingly took the side which was against his own interests. The Directors were again distraught at the prospect of expense piled upon expense. They were entangled in a costly dragging war, and new wars were being pressed upon them, a throwing of good money after bad into a bottomless pit of profligacy! They knew well who was the Governor-General's chief adviser, whose pen provided the vigorous reasoning, tipped and pointed with historical instances calculated to lead astray the very elect. It was the man whom they had detected in a reckless squandering of money on his Residency, and whom, in a despatch of extreme exasperation and asperity, they had ordered to take that wanton wastefulness on his own shoulders—an order which had hitherto been evaded. It is my conviction that Metcalfe lost the Governor-Generalship, the prize he had set before himself at the beginning, in these years. His later clashes with the Directors played their part in deflecting it from him. But there was already a black record against him, and on what his employers considered the worst crime of all, extravagance and financial irresponsibility.

The Governor-General, meanwhile, was checked in his schemes of conquest, though for a while only. He had to finish

## THE GURKHA WAR

with the Gurkhas. The disasters of that war and the opposition of those who held the purse-strings in Calcutta and London, worked together on him to this result, that when he took over as his own Commander-in-Chief the prosecution of the campaign in earnest it was waged with an economy unprecedented in British-Indian history.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF INDIA

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‘I have discovered that I am more attached to Dihlee and the inhabitants . . . than I formerly supposed myself to be. I found, when my removal was probable, that I should quit with great reluctance scenes to which I had become attached by habit, and a people for whose welfare I had several plans unaccomplished. I am well pleased to find myself secured in my own habits, and at liberty to devote myself to the interest of my subjects.’—Metcalf, August 26, 1816.

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Throughout the Gurkha War’s chequered course Metcalfe was kept busy with large-scale intrigues, with this or that enemy general or possible ally. As if this were not enough, he was loaded with every kind of petty task besides. Everyone who has had the misfortune in India to live in ‘a show place’ knows the endless drain on his time and resources, not only by visitors passing through but others who write and commission this or that purchase in the renowned bazaars that are supposed to lie at his door. With his hands so variously full, Metcalfe might have expected to be exempt from this nuisance. He was not, by any means. Colonel Jasper Nicolls begged him to buy a sabre, not exceeding Rs.400 in value, for a *jemadar* who had shown valour. Staid John Adam wanted for Lady Hood—a disturbing apparition in her passage through India, a bird of paradise dazzling in the company of plain ordinary feathers—the finest garnets which Delhi could afford. Mr. Richardson, ‘at the girls’ desire’, wrote for ‘three Solimanee necklaces, bracelets, &c., and also three lapis-lazuli necklaces, bracelets, &c., and any other little trinkets, or Hindostanee ornaments, or costume that you think they would like’. Elphinstone wanted a complete copy of Babar’s autobiography. ‘Some of the literati at Delhi will pro-

## THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF INDIA

bably be able to produce it.' Metcalfe got a copy; it was not good enough, so he had to get another from Peshawar, and also an authentic portrait of the emperor. Ochterlony sent 'a very particular request':

'It is that you will get a slab of marble, and on it cut an inscription of your own composition for the tomb of our lamented Lawtie, at Ruttunghur. Few will read it; but I do not wish an European visitor to pass without knowing that the spot contains the remains of one so deservedly valued and lamented.'

Malcolm wanted information about Aminchand, the banker whom Clive had deceived and 'undeceived'. Sir William Rumbold wanted a wet-nurse sent to Cawnpore. Another correspondent, G. Birch, wanted the Delhi Resident to help a young gentleman by putting in a good word for him to a lady. Edmonstone passed on an enquiry from London, as to marriages between the Mogul Emperors and Rajput families.

One by one, Metcalfe's ties with England were weakening. His mother died, September 9, 1815, 'without uttering a word or a sigh', a restful finish to a life whose opening years had been so tempestuous. 'The purest happiness that I have enjoyed in life is buried in the grave with both my parents; and I have really, at present, no object to live for.'

The war's retrenchments hit him hard, by a reduction of Rs.2,000 a month from his public allowances. He was too depressed to fight this decision, though it would 'keep me in India all my life, as I do not see how I can reduce my expenses'. The reduction ordered in his staff and office establishment he opposed, however, 'as they do not affect me personally'. Then, at the close of 1815, his brother reappeared, ran up to Delhi, and enjoyed the excitement of Charles's fame and the news coming from the front in the Himalayan mountains, where the war was at last going satisfactorily—more or less. 'After a long and inglorious struggle', Metcalfe told Jenkins,<sup>1</sup> who had taken Sherer's place as his closest intimate, 'we have at length, by

<sup>1</sup>June, 1815.

## THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF INDIA

superiority of numbers, the protection of artillery, and length of purse, gained considerable success'.

The Gurkha struggle, which the Governor-General was anxious to wind up as quickly as possible, was accepted as an unfortunate distraction from the real work awaiting the Company's armies in India proper. To this end, reshufflings of portfolios were being considered. Metcalfe had been absent from Delhi for the three winter months (December, 1814, to February, 1815) in attendance on Lord Hastings, who had confidentially, in flattering terms, offered him the Financial Secretaryship, which Tucker was about to vacate. Metcalfe's appointment would have been appropriate, making the man who had been urging wars and more wars (and hang the expense) face the task of meeting that expense. Metcalfe 'almost pledged myself to accept'.<sup>1</sup> Then he hesitated, 'for I am more attached to Delhi, in consequence of the apprehension of quitting it, than I ever was before. What would you think of my impudence, if I were to set up for a Financial Secretary? I do not like to quit the line in which I have served all my life.' Inconsistently (if we choose to press his constant declarations that he did not expect, and hardly hoped, to return home again) he adds: 'I am afraid of being detained longer in the country by the proposed change.'

The possibility passed, and he was glad of it. A year later (August 26, 1816) he told Jenkins that Lord Hastings ('on every occasion most kind to me, and I shall ever be grateful') had offered him the Financial Secretaryship immediately, and the Private Secretaryship next December in addition—an offer he could not have refused, had it been an offer of *both* these lucrative posts now. He had, after wavering, declined it.

'One great advantage which I feel at Dihlee is, that I shall always there be independant of a seat in Council; that is, that I shall not care a straw if I do not obtain one. Had I accepted a Secretaryship in Calcutta, I must have turned my views to Council, and should, in all probability, have been disappointed.'

<sup>1</sup>June, 1815.

## THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF INDIA

Metcalf shrank from accepting any position that might expose him to a snub later. As 'King of Dihlee', he was at the acknowledged top of the political tree. He *might*, if he left it for any lesser post, miss promotion to the Council of Five who governed India. A failure in ambition hurt him like a wound. It would have been for his happiness if this had not been so.

Yet it was a tremendous tribute to propose to a man of just thirty this transference—which everyone understood would have carried far more than the general authority attaching to the positions which he would nominally hold. Metcalfe refused it; and remained in a unique situation, of exceptional confidential relations with the members of the Supreme Government, whose private communications told him everything. It was hard to see what removal to Calcutta could have given him more, except an increase in salary.

'Hurrah! peace with the Goorkhas!' wrote Ricketts to Metcalfe, December 9, 1815. The treaty had 'just been ratified by his Lordship in Council', and ratification by the Nepal Raja was expected in ten days. It proved a false dawn, and the war re-awakened. Ochterlony again duly beat the enemy; and then, thinking 'new negotiations, with the necessary cessation of hostility . . . worse than the acceptance of the old, ready cut and dry', in March, 1816, accepted the former basis of discussion afresh. The Governor-General approved his action entirely, which must have been a strange experience for the brave old man. 'I granted peace', he told Metcalfe, 'on the most submissive entreaty—on the most abject submission, I may say'; and he wrested from the Gurkha plenipotentiaries a document expressly stating that they had given up all hope of more favourable terms, 'and that the most rigid adherence to the very letter of the treaty was the only indulgence they could expect from a Government they had treated so ill'. Metcalfe's friends, Jasper Nicolls and Ochterlony, the men to whom this triumphant conclusion was due, were delighted that so grim a campaign was over, and were deeply grateful to the skill and patience and staunchness



## THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF INDIA

with which he had kept the base while they fought. His former assistant Gardner was sent to Kathmandu, as the first British Resident. The stage was set for India's final pacification.

The Directors (October, 1815) stressed their 'extreme concern' that the cost of the Gurkha War might reduce the 'Investment'. If India could not provide this fund, 'the sales at this House for India goods will soon be brought to a stand'. Next year, George Canning became President of the Board of Control, and he vetoed the Governor-General's wishes. 'We are unwilling to incur the risk of a general war for the uncertain purpose of exterminating the Pindarrees.' The Directors and British Government could not sanction or approve 'extended political and military combinations'; any attempt to 'establish a new system of policy' would wreck the Company's 'economical relations'.

Lord Hastings, however, pushed steadily ahead. As the Prince Regent's intimate friend, he felt an independence of the Directors, and an equality with the Cabinet. In the autumn of 1815 he returned to Calcutta, carrying with him not only Metcalfe's elaborate plans, but the impressions made by prolonged conversations with the men whose work compelled them to live beside the chaos and misery of the devastated central regions. He revised his plans in detail, getting the best advice available. Thus, he wrote to Metcalfe, January 6, 1816, referring to the latter's report just submitted on Holkar's government, and reminded him of an earlier talk about it. Tara Bai, the unprincipled vigorous Regent, was known to be in difficulties. The Governor-General quite correctly surmised that she might be willing to accept British protection. The usual condition of a tribute he waived, 'because I must know that it could not be paid'. But Holkar's troops must be placed at the Company's disposal, and the existing treaty abrogated, so as to open the door to a comprehensive agreement 'with all the Western States'—*i.e.*, the all but submerged Rajput principalities. Lord Hastings indulged the hope that these aims might be achieved without fighting. 'No

## THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF INDIA

proposition must appear to come from us. The suggestion must be made through some trustworthy individual, as if from his own view of matters.' Such an individual should be authorised to talk with Metcalfe.

Metcalfe, whose information was always wide, deep and intimate, disposed of hope and suggestion convincingly, and Lord Hastings dismissed them from his plans. Metcalfe stressed the queer persistence of patriotism under all vicissitudes, which (as Warren Hastings had noted, long ago) differentiated the Marathas from the rest of the Indian peoples:

'The conduct of the Court of Holkar, in submitting to the extreme distress which it suffers, without applying to us for protection, seems to be one of the strongest proofs that could be conceived of their reluctance to be connected with us. The only idea that I can suppose to govern their councils is that of struggling, if possible, with their distresses, and retaining their independance until the arrival of the young Maharajah at manhood, in the hope that he may be able to restore the honor of the fallen state. They know that their independance must cease as soon as they come under our protection; they therefore try every expedient, rather than apply to us, and even have recourse to Scindiah, their old enemy, for pecuniary assistance.'

It would be hard to get a trustworthy agent, who would not be known to be in Company pay. 'All our political agencies in this country are so beset by authorised spies, and every native employed by us has so many inducements to make a parade of the importance of his employment, that it is almost impossible to manage such a communication with the requisite secrecy.' However, Metcalfe would act as instructed, and would give 'every possible encouragement consistent with the preservation of a dignified indifference, and a determination to have that solicited and sought for, which would not be prized if we tendered it gratuitously'. But he cites a recent incident, 'an instance of the little degree in which the views of the Court of Holkar have of late been directed to us'. The Court had no proper representa-

## THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF INDIA

tive at his own Court at Delhi. Their vakil had died a year ago, and his son, though an infant, had been appointed his successor. Metcalfe had pointed out the absurdity of this, and had received the answer, half irony and half impudence, that the arrangement was a good one. 'There was no negotiation likely to occur with the British Government, which could need the presence of a real man of business.'

Blocked here, Lord Hastings prepared to advance in other directions. At this period he wrote to Metcalfe with as near an approach to warmth as was consistent with his character, and his letters to him (and to him only) sometimes have a trickle stirring beneath their frozen surface. Metcalfe cautiously reciprocated, hoping that 'Lady Loudoun and your Lordship's charming family' might have a pleasant passage to England. There is no doubt that the man whose influence was strongest in the Government of India, both with the Governor-General and with the members of his Council, was Metcalfe.

At the end of April, 1816, Adam apprised him that the long-canvassed question of Jaipur was to be settled. Agreement or no agreement, the State was to be rescued. 'Nothing will be precipitated; in a word, you will manage the negotiation in your own way. Ochterlony will command the force to advance into Jyepore when the treaty is settled. . . . I do hope we shall yet save that devoted state, and combine the cause of justice and humanity with the promotion of our own interests.' But the Raja, who had passed through so many alternations of mood, from extreme despair when Amir Khan brought his cannon within shooting distance of his capital to terror of British protection when the shadow of that protection frightened the spoiler to a distance again, procrastinated. The treaty's signing was postponed still further.

On June 9, 1816, Lord Hastings sent Metcalfe 'a hasty line', written almost excitedly. 'Give us credit for not sleeping over our work.' The shyest of all the shy birds in India (and they were many) had been at last brought into the Company's net;

## THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF INDIA

Apa Sahib, the Regent of Nagpur, had accepted a subsidiary force and treaty. Lord Hastings hoped this would mean an extension of patronage for the military. 'Colonel Doveton is to occupy Nagpore for the moment, as it was essential that no time should be lost in the introduction of our troops. But I mean that it should be hereafter a command from the Bengal army, to which I think I shall ultimately render some service.' To Metcalfe's delight, his friend Jenkins was sent to Nagpur as Resident.

In December, 1816, the Governor-General's Council unanimously decided on the Pindaris' extirpation. The Directors presently assented. A vast army was gathered, and drawn around the freebooters' wide-ranging haunts. Sindhia, told that he must either help or suffer as an enemy, gave way sullenly, and his territories were at the Company's disposal, for supplies and communications. Metcalfe was ordered to make alliances with the Rajput states and to detach Amir Khan—who had absorbed Muhammad Khan's forces when the latter died in 1814, and had thereby gained an accession of troops better armed and disciplined than his own. 'It may be wise, if it can be done without affectation, to waken a little the hopes of Ameer Khan.' The threatened Pindaris and the Peshwa (known to be intriguing madly, and about to make a desperate effort to break out of his toils of subordination) were trying hard to persuade him to 'a grand co-operation of predatory powers'. If he refused, his refusal would do much to keep them all quiet.

'An appearance of wishing to know precisely the territory to which he looks, with obscure hints that there may be soon a course of measures favourable to his views, might be likely to keep him right. . . . The coming to a point would be easily evaded by you, on the plea that I was shortly expected in the Upper Country.'<sup>1</sup>

Since that morning when Amir Khan hurt his dignity by asking him his name, Metcalfe had been in frequent intercourse with the veteran robber; he knew his habits intimately, and a pleasing

<sup>1</sup>Lord Hastings to Metcalfe, May 5, 1817.

## THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF INDIA

cynicism informed his advice now. He thought the Company might guarantee to Amir Khan and his heirs the districts of which he was tenant under Holkar. Some provision being plainly necessary to persuade him to mend his ways, 'it is proper that it should consist of the same territories which have hitherto supported him as a pest to the peaceable part of India'. He might be required to disband his troops, hand over his artillery 'at a fair valuation', and settle down as a quiet regular Prince, with only enough force to collect his revenues. He would perhaps ask for money, to pay up his soldiers before dismissing them; but 'we shall require all our money for other purposes'. He would probably ask also for a grant of territory in the Company's dominions; 'it is to be hoped that we need not make such a sacrifice'. If he did not sign on the dotted line presented to him, he must be crushed with the rest of his kind.

Amir Khan read the signs of the times too accurately to make any mistake; and on November 9, 1817, his vakil concluded a treaty with Metcalfe. He ceased to be Holkar's dependent, and obtained a new status,<sup>1</sup> along with money to pay his men their arrears. The transaction shocked Ochterlony, who kept old-fashioned notions of political morality; he called it 'giving him a large portion of country not our own, before we have had the least communication with his principal on his past conduct'.

But Metcalfe was not bothering about political right. Disgusted with Central India's anarchy, he was more than ready to believe that there was a higher morality, like the primeval and eternal one of which Carlyle was always so sure, and that this morality demanded the ruthless suppression of technical objections. A settlement was needed; if Amir Khan's bribing would save lives and expense and bring that settlement nearer, Metcalfe was not going to be a stickler for the letter of propriety. He had for years urged the abrogation of all hampering treaties and conventions and recognitions, and the pacification and rebuilding of India by the Company's right of superior power.

<sup>1</sup>His descendants are Nawabs of Tonk.

## THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF INDIA

He made the treaty, therefore, which Ochterlony as a special political officer put into effect. Less suspicious than Metcalfe, and far more tolerant in his judgment of Native Princes, Ochterlony was presently affirming that if he had two lakhs of his own, 'I should not hesitate to give it to Meer Khan, so completely has he assured me of his sincerity'. The Governor-General in reply asked him to assure Amir Khan that the British would do even better than they had promised, if he stayed quiet.

The Governor-General took the field in person, October 16, 1817, and events followed in quick succession. He proclaimed the Rajput states protectorates, and publicly abrogated Barlow's treaty with the Maratha powers. Metcalfe invited the Rajput chiefs to send vakils to conclude arrangements to enter the Company's system. They came, most of them with immense relief—representatives of states at the last gasp of existence, weaker than perhaps any states have ever been without dying out altogether. The tributes due under definite agreements to other Powers were transferred to the British Government. Each prince was guaranteed against elimination or attack, external or internal, and against interference in his own affairs. Each ceased to have any independent external relations.

The Pindari campaign, as had been anticipated, was accompanied by a series of Maratha explosions. The Peshwa and the Raja of Nagpur attacked their Residents (November 5 and 26), whose subsidiary force in each instance proved amply adequate to repulse their assailants. In December, Holkar's sirdars found their Regent, Tara Bai, in treacherous correspondence with the British, and executed her by beheading. On December 20, Sir John Malcolm, as the leading brigadier of the Commander-in-Chief's army, 'clubbed his battalions', and in the strategic manner he had learnt from his master the Duke of Wellington (who used it notably at Assaye) crossed the Sipra in face of the enemy, and went 'bald-headed' for Holkar's army at Mahidpur, winning a complete victory at some unnecessary cost. Presently, Malcolm was settling the affairs of Indore; and finally, in 1819, when the

## THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF INDIA

Peshwa had been run to a standstill, he arranged the disappearance from the political scene of the Marathas' titular head. The Pindaris had been destroyed or scattered: Sindhia and Holkar and a shrunken Nagpur *raj* survived in complete subordination: the Rajput states were breathing, and if carefully nursed might some day recover the actuality of rule and power. The settlement of Central India had been achieved—more than that, in all essentials the political framework of India had been finished. During the next hundred years, only details were to be changed.

Metcalfe's work at Delhi was also finished. Ricketts was to go home in January, 1819, and Adam would thereby become a Member of Council in his stead. On October 9, 1818, Adam wrote to Metcalfe that the Governor-General was anxious that he should take over the positions of himself and Ricketts, and be both Secretary to the Secret and Political Department and principal Private Secretary. The salaries of these posts were Rs.50,000 and Rs.36,000 a year respectively. That is, he was to receive between £9,000 and £10,000. He was begged to consent, and assured that everything would be made as easy as possible for him. 'I am sure you will find yourself happy in Calcutta, where so many will rejoice to see you established. I cannot tell you the comfort I feel at the department passing into such hands.' Metcalfe accepted.

Even more flattering was the decision that the duties which had been laid on his sole shoulders for so many years were too much for any other man. 'It is not to be expected of Ochterlony, or of any other man, that he should go through the Herculean labors that you have sustained.' Ochterlony was to be the new Resident at Delhi, with command of a division and political oversight of Amir Khan and the Rajput states; the judicial and financial work of the Delhi district, however, were to be in the hands of a civil officer.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ochterlony disliked this arrangement. 'I am seriously convinced that there cannot be a worse plan than a Resident and a Commissioner' (July 29, 1820, to Metcalfe: Paransis Historical Museum, Satara MSS.).

## THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF INDIA

Ochterlony, like Eyre Coote and to some extent Malcolm, was unlucky, both in life and in the comparative oversight of his great services by posterity. We have seen that he had been removed from being Resident of Delhi, in 1805, an action meant as a snub though buttered with praise that deceived nobody. He never forgot this injustice, and knew that he was suspect and despised in the highest quarters. In the years that had since rolled away he had done every task entrusted to him, and done it well: had kept the peace on the Punjab's borders, had saved one flank of the Gurkha War when all the others had fallen into confusion and defeat, had ultimately lifted that war on to the plane of victory. But the sting of that removal remained, though it had not for one moment clouded over his affectionate relations with Metcalfe, the boy who had held the position for which he himself was not considered good enough. In January, 1818, he let his feelings overflow to his friend:

'In twelve days I shall complete my sixtieth year; and in that long period have never but once had just ground to complain of ill fortune or ill usage. But that once, though it has led me to unexpected fame and honor, has, for nearly twelve years, preyed upon my spirits; and all I have since gained appears no recompense for a removal which stamped me with those who knew me best, and loved me most, as ignorant and incompetent, and with the world in general as venal and culpable. A feeling which I cannot describe, but which is quite distinct from the love of ease and the advantages of a Residency, makes me wish for that situation. I would not care where; the name alone seems as if it would wash out a stain.'

'I cannot help thinking', he wrote, when he heard it rumoured that he was to succeed Metcalfe, 'that Sir George Barlow's infliction is to pursue me through life.' When this misgiving proved mistaken, he went wild with delight. Metcalfe gave him the news, and in acknowledgment Ochterlony told him 'not to expect much sense or connexion in a letter written in a tumult of joy and exultation'. He asked humbly for instructions, and begged 'the child of my affection' to help with advice, for very love's



## THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF INDIA

sake. 'If I do not speak of other motives, it is not because I am insensible that others exist; but because I flatter myself that none can be more acceptable to you than the forcible one implied in a parental love.'<sup>1</sup>

So Metcalfe went, leaving the scene of what he always considered his greatest work. His countrymen in Delhi told him what they thought of him, in an Address whose stilted diction fails to conceal gratitude. It spoke of his 'urbanity, kindness, and marked attention to private rights and feelings'. Indians had not yet learnt to express themselves in English. But Ochterlony assured him (December 22, 1818):

'If you had known how much and how generally your departure would have been mourned, you never could have left Dihlee. But your humility never gave you a just idea of your value, and I shall have much to do, much to change in my habits and temper, and much to perform, before I shall be able to reconcile the palace, the city, or the European society, to the great loss they have sustained.'

The genuineness of sorrow could not be doubted. Indians did not 'usually deal' in praise when speaking of a predecessor

<sup>1</sup>Since it is commonly believed in India (and Government has put the belief into public statements in museums which are visited by millions) that Ochterlony died broken-hearted because of his supersession by Metcalfe, and that the two had tragic differences, it is worth saying briefly that nothing could be falser. From first to last, Ochterlony's letters to 'My dear Charles' are tremulous with affection. 'Forget I am old and regard me as a Friend or remember I am old & let me possess the portion of your Love due to one whose Feelings are not far short of paternal when he subscribes himself most affectionately Yours Da. Ochterlony' (July 5, 1816). 'Yours with paternal regards' (July 29, 1820). Metcalfe's probable return to displace him again being rumoured, he pleaded that he was not willing to be publicly disgraced a second time, yet was ready to be transferred to 'Lucnow' 'with Pleasure *for you* . . . but I should not wish it for any other' (July 29, 1820). 'To make Room for you I would go to a worse Place than Lucnow without considering that I laid you under the least Obligation' (July 31, 1824). To the moment of death he continued pathetically dependent on his all-powerful, all-wise young patron. I hope I have killed an old and tenacious misrepresentation.

(These letters, with others of similar tone and tenor, are in the Parasnis Museum MSS., Satara).

## THE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT OF INDIA

to 'a present incumbent'. Wilder, British Agent at Ajmer, wrote, April 5, 1819, to tell Metcalfe of the way visitors from Delhi had talked of him. 'I never thought before that the natives possessed such feelings.' Reports that he was about to return excited Delhi for some years, and their dying away unrealised left disappointment. Metcalfe himself, in natural pleasure to find such love and esteem were felt for him, in September, 1821, sent his sister an anthology of tributes to him. On the back of the collection he wrote, 'Vanity Vanity All is Vanity'. 'Muntazim-ud-Daula heard and remained silent.'

## CHAPTER XII

### MAINLY PERSONAL

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'A Formality and stately Etiquette is introduced at the Government House, not at all suited to the Habits and Manners of the Community. Whether custom will reconcile it is doubtful; at present it rather disgusts. The Society is accustomed to an intercourse with its Governor of dignified affability on his part, and of respectful freedom on theirs, and will not, I apprehend, readily adopt the relations of Sovereign and Subjects. A Household Establishment is formed resembling that of Royalty—probably modelled on that of the Castle of Dublin. Be it as it may, the transition is too abrupt to please.'—William Palmer to Warren Hastings, November 4, 1813.

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**I**t will be remembered that Metcalfe's father, by way of helpful hint or warning, when telling of Lord Hastings's appointment had underlined the statement that he was susceptible to flattery. Lord Hastings brought also a degree of disillusionment and cynicism which the society he found in Calcutta greatly increased; and he established an elaborateness and stiffness of ceremonial to which it had long been unaccustomed. Minto had carried ease and friendliness to perhaps a slovenly extreme; his successor tightened up official ritual, until the days of Wellesley seemed to have returned.

Lord Hastings was an old man, set in his ways and in self-esteem; Metcalfe was still physically and mentally a young man. There could be no intimacy between them. But at first the Governor-General thawed out to his brilliant assistant as much as it was in his nature to thaw to anyone. He would sign himself, with a ponderous approach to playfulness, Metcalfe's 'most humble, most obedient servant'; would break out in occasional franknesses of vexation, as this one, over an official's letter:

'It is really unpardonable in any Public Functionary to write about important concerns, tho in Private Form, with such

## MAINLY PERSONAL

slatternly Penmanship as to make the decyphering his Letter chiefly guesswork.'

Metcalf reciprocated such unusual condescension, by gratitude for trust and dependence on him.

The dependence was certainly unusual, the trust firm. The Supreme Council was a tiny group about which revolved a hardly larger group, whose importance was very little less and whose relations were close with the actual Councillors. All, both within the Council and on its immediate outskirts, were Metcalfe's friends. Adam and James Stuart inside the Council; Sherer (Advocate-General, and principal Law Adviser), Swinton (Persian Secretary), Butterworth Bayley (Chief Secretary), were men whose progress had kept pace with his, and who took pride in his fame. No oligarchy can ever have been more of a family group, united by the same memories and pleasures and jests, from the same social stratum and often from the same school. Howe Boys had their special banquets, Calcutta Etonians their annual dinners.

The Secretaries (as Metcalfe himself in after-days, when a Member of Council, complained) considered themselves only nominally inferior to the Councillors, and when summoned for advice gave opinions arrogantly and decidedly. They got hold of patronage, and from their intimacy of employment about his person often made a party with the Governor-General against his Council. Metcalfe, who had correct views of duty and position, kept the friendship of the Members of Council. But his character and fame and experience inevitably gave him even more than the usual authority of his station. His sister heard that he was 'the greatest Man in Calcutta with the exception of only the Governor-General'—a statement which he laughingly put by, without denial:

'The Truth is, there is but one Man in Calcutta, and that is the Governor-General. A Man in my situation might assume a great deal and take advantage of opportunities to exercise great influence; but this I will not do. As patronage is not avowedly accorded to me, I will not steal it.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Georgiana Metcalfe, June 24, 1820: Clive Bayley MSS.

## MAINLY PERSONAL

But influence, if not patronage, Metcalfe could not escape. We find John Low writing him long eager letters consulting him as to the amount of public honour to be paid to his Highness the ex-Peshwa. Elphinstone rejoices that it is to Metcalfe that he must write on business. Richard Jenkins receives private assurances of 'my own sentiments distinct from those of the Government' (after Metcalfe had written officially, as their Secretary), sentiments full of the intoxication of conquest and lamenting that Nagpur had not been annexed along with the Peshwa's state:

'Malcolm and others seemed to take up and advocate a scheme of setting up a Mahomedan interest in opposition to the Hindoos or more especially the Mahrattas. It appeared to me that the time was past for our trusting to any balance of power for our support; that the setting up of Mahomedan powers was in itself objectionable, and that our true policy was to secure as much country as possible for ourselves; and to announce ourselves avowedly as the master of all the powers of India.'<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps not a highly ethical letter; yet it expresses an important conviction, which was to be a bridge to his later convictions, that were passionately against conquest and annexation. He says, 'The worst plan of all, I think, is to keep in a Minister against the will of the Prince, and to support the man without regard to his measures . . . the mode we have generally slidden into.' He would leave the choice of Ministers to the Prince, interfering only as to measures, a method which 'I do not think has ever been attempted'. How right he was, he was soon to learn.

Metcalfe was much concerned with the education of his three sons. With his youngest sister Georgiana, whom he had known as only a child of six, he now held close affectionate correspondence. She had charge of his children, whom he had sent to England; and though she did not take them into her own household, she gave the most patient care to the choice of tutors and schools, and their father repaid her with unbounded gratitude. 'I

<sup>1</sup>Letter, July 5, 1820.

## MAINLY PERSONAL

now leave', he tells her, October 17, 1819,<sup>1</sup> 'Henry's fate and that of the others entirely to you. . . . I will state general principles but even these are not to fetter you. The peculiar situation of my Boys requires that they should have a Home as well as a place of Education. Therefore the House of a Man and a Gentleman who would receive them and consider them as at Home with him is desirable. A Clergyman for obvious reasons would be preferable, other essential points being equal. A married Man better than a single, as they might then receive the Motherly Attentions which a Woman only can bestow, and as the Habits of the Family would with greater certainty be orderly and correct. A Couple without Children, at least without Boys, especially young ones, would also be preferable to one with them. Girls would not only be unobjectionable but perhaps advantageous as softening the Hearts of my Youngsters with something like the Attachment which Brothers have for Sisters. A virtuous Man, a good-tempered Man, a contented Man, he should indispensably be. . . . Do what you think best and let no Expense be spared. I have before explained that I hold myself if possible more bound to secure for these unfortunates all the advantages in my power, than if they had been born under happier auspices, as they must bear through life a Stigma inflicted by the Fault of their Father.'

There were still in his heart dim thoughts of possible marriage, but they were not often or strongly stirring:

'I have now been long enough in Calcutta and its gay circles to know that my singleness does not proceed merely from absence of pretty and engaging Girls. If you are as determined to remain single as I am (till I alter), you might look out for some nice cottage in Wales or one of the Islands in the Lakes, where we may pass our days together far from the smoke and noise of the Fashionable World.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS.

<sup>2</sup>October 17, 1819. Metcalfe always looked longingly at 'the Lakes', of whose size and the size of their 'Islands' he had the vaguest ideas.

## MAINLY PERSONAL

Georgiana hinted that she might herself come to Calcutta. He opposed the idea, while admitting that 'if circumstances should make you desire to have some independant Home, India would be preferable to China' (where Theophilus was), 'on account of the confinement and want of female society at the latter place'.<sup>1</sup> But he thought little of such female society as India could provide. Their life together would be this: a short drive or walk in his grounds before sunrise, breakfast at eight, separation until another short drive or walk at sunset, confinement to the house because of the heat during most of the year, early rising and early retirement for health's sake, and incessant loneliness for her. In the cold weather there would be balls and dinner parties, 'which you would perhaps agree with me in not liking over-much'. Outside Calcutta she would find things still duller, as he would be in camp or on tour in 'places where you could not go'. Even at Delhi, 'there would be a total want of female society such as you would like—such, I mean, as in education, manners, &c., would be suited to your tastes and habits. We are not without our share of good amiable and respectable Women of all Colours, but out of Calcutta a *Lady* is a Rarity—I mean, a Lady fitted for High Life; or such as you have been accustomed to.'

His letters, from now on, with return and iteration go over the questions of what he should do if he retired to England, and whether he had accumulated the fortune he needs. One citation, from his letter of June 24, 1820, can serve for many similar ones:

'By the time you receive this letter I shall have above £40,000 in this Country—add £10,000 at Home—Total £50,000. If my affairs go on as prosperously as heretofore I shall have £100,000 in six years. Before that period I do not think of quitting India; and between that and ten years appears to me to be the most likely time. . . . A Seat in Council, of which by the bye I see no probability, would send me home in five Years from my appointment, as I should not like to return

<sup>1</sup>June 24, 1820.

## MAINLY PERSONAL

to any situation lower in rank, after sitting in the Supreme Council. . . .

'Should I try for a Seat in the Court of East India Directors? I have no inclination that way. The attendance is too incessant—and the duties which the younger Directors have to perform, such as Committees, of Shipping, Warehouses, Sales, are not much to be admired. Then by the time one rises to the Senior List and takes a part in the affairs of India, one's knowledge is out of date and of no Use. Should I seek place and employment under Ministers? Certainly not. My Servitude shall end here; and nothing below the Cabinet (which I need not say is out of the Question) would tempt me into servitude in England. The only Duty that I fancy and in that I should most probably after experience be disappointed, is the duty of an independant Member of the House of Commons, scorning to be the tool of Ministers or Opposition, acting on all occasions from one's own conscience, for the good of one's Country, according to one's own judgment and enjoying one's own approbation, without hope of profit or reward of any kind, without even influence, for there seems to be no influence without party. . . . But then, how is a Seat in Parliament to be obtained? There are three ways—By the Gift of a Man of Influence; which I would not accept, as it would barter one's Independance. By one's own local influence; of which I have none. By Purchase; for which a Capital of Twenty Thousand Pounds at least is requisite to be applied exclusively to this purpose. This leads to another Question. What Fortune is necessary? On this point you will know better than me. My Calculation is as follows. For Table House Servants Equipage and every thing included under the Head of Living £2000 per Annum. For Parliament £1000. For Children to educate & push on in the World £1000. For Pocket Money; Assistance to Fellow Creatures; Purchase of Books; and other Contingencies £1000. In all £5000 per Annum. . . . Do you settle what is necessary for living, and I will calculate 3000 per Anm. above that for the other Items, hoping that this sum will suffice for them. Thus you see I require at least 5000 a Year . . . and perhaps 6000 or 7000 if you think that I ought to appropriate a larger sum for Living.'



## MAINLY PERSONAL

Six months later (January 23, 1821), when he had gone to Hyderabad as Resident, and begun a new course, he writes that his mind has hardened against returning at all:

'I have no inducement to go to England, that is, no inducement sufficiently powerful for the sacrifice of the degree of happiness which I enjoy in this Country. . . . Who can wish to live among a disaffected & rebellious people, who, longing for revolution, & wishing to insult their King, laud to the skies & carry about in triumph the most depraved and abandoned of Women?<sup>1</sup> In such a state of things, one must expect to be called on to take a part, either on the Side of the disaffected and in favor of a revolution, or in support of abuses which one wishes to see remedied, and of rotten institutions which one desires to see reformed. My first choice would be against revolution & anarchy; and if we succeeded in putting them down I might in these very exertions lend a hand to the establishment of Tyranny. The prospect is very discouraging and the conduct of the people very disgusting. Between the Jacobinical Fury of the Mob—and the Party Spirit of the Upper Classes—there is no spot where public virtue & patriotism are to be found. If a spark of them existed we should be paying off the National Debt, and reducing Taxation, by voluntary sacrifices on the part of the wealthy. Most willingly would I give a  $\frac{1}{4}$  or a  $\frac{1}{2}$  or whatever portion might be required of any fortune I may have now or hereafter.'

He goes on to express a deep conviction—disillusion, and contempt for man, the silliest of all the animals:

'Where am I running to? I only intended to say that I am disgusted with the altered Character of the People of England, and doubt whether I shall ever settle amongst them. They are not the loyal goodnatured people they were. Here there is nothing to love or admire in the people, but then one does not expect to love or admire them, and one is not disappointed in not being able to do so.'

Habits of unquestioned authority are hard to eradicate; his work and status irked him. 'It may be sufficient to observe', he

<sup>1</sup>Queen Caroline.

## MAINLY PERSONAL

told his sister (May, 1820), 'that one who has been a Governor himself cannot like to be a Secretary. So I must turn again to the Trade of a Governor.' He opened his mind to Malcolm, who responded excitedly. 'I have this moment' (February 19, 1820) 'received your letter. . . . I can enter fully into your feelings. . . . Had I been near you, the King of Delhi should have been dissuaded from becoming an executive officer, and resigning power to jostle for influence.' He recognised 'in all your letters the unaltered Charles Metcalfe with whom I used to pace the tent at Muttra and build castles, our expenditure on which was neither subject to the laws of estimate nor the rules of audit'. About to take furlough, Malcolm was eager not to leave his lifework to be wrecked by some conventionally trained officer; and to him, as to others, it seemed absurd and tragic that one of the small renowned group who had directed the storm just over, and by industrious valour had been able

*To ruin the great work of Time, climb  
And set the kingdoms old  
Into another mould,*

should be at a desk in Calcutta. Elphinstone was remaking Maharastra, Jenkins was absolute in nominally unannexed Nagpur, he himself was—well, Malcolm Sahib, riding where he would and pulling down and setting up, often in blunderingly generous fashion, but in the main more than adequately, because he disarmed anger and conciliated a proud new-conquered people.

He at once planned to get Metcalfe appointed to follow him and no official haphazardly flung out by the impulses of patronage:

'I can have no idea that the nature and extent of my political duties are fully understood. They comprise not merely general control, but in many cases minute interference with every large state and petty chief from Serorissi east to Dunderpore west—from the Satporah Hills to the Mahindra Pass north and south.

## MAINLY PERSONAL

They include the keeping of the peace, by orders, requests, arbitrations and decisions among the numerous Nabobs, Rajahs, Rogues, and Ryots of this extensive space, who are united in no sentiment but one—a common respect and deference for the representative of the British Government. On him their continuance at peace with each other depends. When I reflect on the elements of which this mass is composed, I can hardly trust the charm by which they are kept in concord; but weaken that, and you have years of confusion.’

If the Central Indian satrapy were offered on proper terms, he begged Metcalfe to accept it. ‘Come up in November, and let us be one month together. I may leave you a Governor-General’s Agent or Commissioner; but depend upon it that ere long you would be a Lieutenant-Governor. These are changes that will force themselves.’

Malcolm promised to write confidentially to Adam, and did so. Almost simultaneously, Metcalfe heard from Marjoribanks, the officer in charge of the Narbada districts recently taken from the Peshwa. Marjoribanks asked him to use his influence to get him leave to resign. Metcalfe’s imagination immediately fired at the thought of ‘setting up my flag on the Nerbudda’, and he saw Adam. Malcolm now wrote to them both, outlining a plan to consolidate his own and Marjoribank’s charges into one, a new province of which Metcalfe should be Lieutenant-Governor. Adam at once wrote to Metcalfe:

‘I am satisfied that it ought to be done . . . it would be more worthy of your powers, and more advantageous to the public interests. I cannot wonder at your preferring such a situation to your present one, even if the latter had better answered your expectations.’

This note Metcalfe exultantly pencilled: ‘*The union of Malcolm’s charge and Marjoribanks’ would be grand indeed! and make me King of the East and the West!*’ The prospect nerved him to what Kaye calls ‘the delicate distresses’ of a long letter to the Governor-General, asking what is never an easy thing to ask, a

## MAINLY PERSONAL

stupendously magnificent post for oneself. He admits that his Lordship may not 'think me in my right senses'; when he reflects 'on the respectability, emoluments, luxury, comforts, and presumed prospects of my present situation—on the honor of holding a place so near your Lordship's person, combined with the enjoyment of continual intercourse with your Lordship, and on the happiness conferred by your invariable kindness', Metcalfe cannot be sure of his wisdom himself, 'in seeking to be deprived of so many advantages, in order to undertake arduous duties of fearful responsibility'. However, there was nothing for it but to plunge, fool or no fool. The impending departure of both Malcolm and Marjoribanks would 'leave unoccupied an important field of public service'. The union of their posts would result in economies and 'hold forth the prospect of a noble station, combining high political and administrative functions'. He now knew that his duties in Calcutta were less congenial than his former employments. He would like to return to Delhi, if the Residency were vacant, but refused to wish this 'at the expense of my friend Sir David Ochterlony'. Anticipating the objection that Malcolm's work alone would be enough for one man, he urges, almost tremulously, that 'the discharge of the territorial duties of Mr. Marjoribanks' office is to me a fascinating part of the plan which I have suggested'. With the able assistants already in that part of India, and with a few slight modifications, he was sure he could do the double duty. If this could be granted, he wished to go in November, when Malcolm was due to leave for Scotland. The interim after Marjoribanks's leaving his Nabada charge could be filled in by two *locum tenentes* there.

This letter did Metcalfe harm later, when his enemies, Lord Hastings most of all, were looking everywhere for weapons with which to strike him. His perfectly sincere, but too extravagantly expressed, sentiments of gratitude to the Governor-General for his kindness always, were twisted into an awareness deep down that he had turned against his benefactor. His excessive depreciation of his own motives—'Your Lordship will perceive that I

## MAINLY PERSONAL

have considered only myself in this proposition'—was taken from its context, and he was considered to have convicted himself, out of his own mouth, of unscrupulous ambition. Now, however, Lord Hastings, still well pleased with his subordinate, assured him (April 5) that he 'did not startle at' his letter, though he could not discuss it now. Metcalfe was given to understand that his request would be granted. He told his sister, May, 1820:

'Sir John Malcolm is to go to England at the end of this year, and I am to succeed him in the political functions which he at present exercises, with the addition of some of the territories conquered in 1818. On the whole, it will be a vast change, comprising seven or eight Degrees of Longitude, and will be honorable, as it is the part of India about which Govt. is at present most anxious. . . . I shall set out on a new Career, and in that Situation I shall most probably remain until I get a Seat in Council; or, if the Directors do not acknowledge my claim to that advancement, till I return to England.'

He had reached that period of life which comes to all of us, when the rest of our course—in its main outlines—is plainly visible.

Metcalfe did not, however, go to Central India. In April, his cousin-by-marriage, Henry Russell, Resident of Hyderabad, wrote that he meant to retire when the year ended, and, in the frank manner in which the *di majores* of India handed about—or proposed to hand about—their thrones to each other, he said:

'I should be delighted to deliver this Residency into your hands. You will find an excellent house completely furnished; a beautiful country; one of the finest climates in India; and, when the business which now presses has been disposed of, abundance of leisure to follow your personal pursuits.'

Russell, as Metcalfe was to discover later, was one of the laziest and most selfish men that ever went to India. He brushed by Metcalfe's reply that he was dreaming of a Central Indian proconsulship, with a long and scandalously dishonest letter emphasising the fine work he had done in setting the Nizam's

## MAINLY PERSONAL

affairs on an even keel—which needed only that he should not have ‘a clumsy successor’ to wreck his labours, ‘or a hostile or illiberal one’ to deprive him of credit. The letter is rancid with complacency, nauseating and noxious. He stressed his own need for rest at last, the rest which the righteous earn but can so rarely get unless some other of the righteous will consent to take up their duties. ‘It was a sacrifice, and a great one too, for me to resolve on staying so long.’ But ‘no galley-slave ever laid down his oar with greater joy’ than he would feel if he could relinquish his charge ‘with justice to myself, and with a conviction that I leave the public interests in the hands of an able and upright successor’. He urged everything; Metcalfe in Central India would either be wandering all over the place—all very well for John Malcolm, who revelled in that kind of thing—or else would have to build and furnish a house, at the cost of at least a lakh out of his private fortunes (he knew Metcalfe had not forgotten his losses over the matter of the Delhi Residency furnishings).

‘At Hyderabad, after the first six months, when you have looked thoroughly into everything, you will find, compared with what you have been accustomed to, little to give you trouble: at least half your time will be at your own disposal; and you will step at once, without care or expense, into a house completely furnished, and provided with every accommodation.’

Kaye observes, ‘An abler man than Mr. Henry Russell has seldom gone out to India. He seems to have seen clearly, from the first, the wrongs under which the Nizam’s territory was groaning.’ I do not understand what was Kaye’s criterion of ability; but, accepting it as valid, his conclusion can only make the man’s damnation the more complete, and the contempt to which he is entitled grows darker.

‘He was, indeed, continually describing, in language so vigorous and eloquent that it is a pleasure to read his despatches, the diseases which were eating into the State and making the whole one mass of corruption. . . . He found them; and it is but right to say that he desired and endeavoured to remove them.’

## MAINLY PERSONAL

To me it seems far more right to say that, more than any other single man, Russell had the responsibility of causing these diseases. When he later realised that his successor was not going to be his accomplice in glossing them over and in concealing his own iniquity, he was Metcalfe's malignant slanderer.

However, his arguments prevailed now; and Metcalfe, instead of pressing for his Central Indian governorship, went to what he styled 'another field, not so extensive, but more compact and more comfortable, and so offering a prospect of greater leisure'. In this listless mood he was led to—not leisure, but—his bravest work, which exacted from him the final loss of his dreams and of his belief in his fellows. Its pay was poor, by the standard to which he was accustomed: Rs.34,310 personal salary, and Rs. 62,323 table allowance. Its upshot was a lasting wretchedness.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

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'I have no present Thoughts of quitting India. The Happiness of Millions is affected, and, if I do not deceive myself, promoted by my Individual Conduct. I have had a hard struggle against Vice & Corruption. I have now a Glimpse of Victory, & must perform the Work I have commenced.'—Metcalfe to his sister Georgiana, March 24, 1823.

'I am falsely described as the author of our interference, when I was only the faithful and moderate executor of the orders of my own government.'—Metcalfe to George Swinton, August 14, 1826.

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If Metcalfe had not been at his lowest point of vitality and preoccupied with personal affairs, he would have noticed, while still in Calcutta, to what a depth of cynicism the Governor-General had descended, dragging with him everyone in his circle. It is hard to understand why Hyderabad was such a shock when he became Resident; as Secretary to the Secret and Political Department he had had opportunities and to spare, to know what was happening, and that no inconsiderable part of the mischief proceeded directly from the world in which he himself moved.

The Nizam's country had never been anything but a puppet state. The present Nizam was understood to be, in Malcolm's phrase, 'a melancholy madman'. Metcalfe was the first to discover that his melancholy was real enough, and as deep as life itself, but his madness more controversial. He had tried to assert himself against a former Resident, Captain Sydenham; and had been snubbed so effectively that he threw up all attempt to rule, retiring into a seclusion which he practically never violated, holding no durbars, granting no interviews, and leaving everything to his British master and that master's tools, who (as he said) had relieved him of his government and made it entirely



## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

their business. He met all complaints, if they reached him at all, with this despairing answer. Sydenham left in 1810, and after a brief interregnum in which the Residency business was irregularly conducted by a Charles Russell, that Russell's brother Henry arrived as the *pukka* Resident, and all things went on as before (having, indeed, known no sort of interruption).

The revenues of Hyderabad estate amounted to about £3,000,000 yearly. Sydenham, and after him Russell, dictated the Nizam's choice of Minister. The nominal chief officer was Munir-al-Mulk, reported by the Residents to be a very bad man. Convinced by their despatches, Edmonstone expressed his horror to Russell, May 6, 1812:

'Never, to be sure, was there such a Government since the world began, and what can be done to remedy its present state would baffle any politician but a French one, who would no doubt propose to take the said Government under the protecting care and superintendence of its ally.'

Rejecting so high-handed a course, the British thrust into the position of actual ruler, under Munir-al-Mulk as nominal chief, a Hindu, Chandu Lal, whom the Resident represented as a fine and able character. 'And if Chundoo Loll is to have an opponent in his colleague', observed Mr. Russell, 'he cannot have a better one than Mooneer-ool-Moolk, who is both a coward and a fool.'

Metcalf's judgment, come by gradually but held with increasing never-shaken conviction, was that Chandu Lal was energetic and utterly devoted to British interests (a merit he never failed to allow him), but extravagant, rapacious, entirely faithless. 'He talks very rationally on all subjects, describes plausibly, feelingly and with apparent truth his difficulties.'<sup>1</sup> 'He has the plausibility ascribed to Satan, and will assuredly deceive those the most who most trust to him.'<sup>2</sup> He was possessed by 'the evil spirit of extortion.'<sup>3</sup>

Colonel Sutherland, for seven years before Metcalfe came a

<sup>1</sup>Metcalf in 1821.

<sup>2</sup>Metcalf, February 22, 1826.

<sup>3</sup>Metcalf's *Minute*, May 13, 1829.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

pitying spectator of Hyderabad's misery, says of Chandu Lal: 'His connection with us involved him in large expenditures, for it is not to be supposed that without some corresponding advantages we would have continued our support.'<sup>1</sup> His brother Govinda Baksh governed the dependent sub-province of the Berars, and those who had inclination to weigh so nice a problem considered him, if anything, a shade the more rascally of the two. All security vanished in their monumental and majestic dishonesty. Finance began, Metcalfe remarks, at the wrong end. Instead of assessing land at what it could pay, Chandu Lal decided what sums he needed, and then farmed out the revenue to the best bidders, who were given powers of life and death, with no appeal. Once crops were on the ground, the collectors took what they thought fit, brushing aside the settlements. There was a saying that in Hyderabad the farmers after concluding a 'settlement' with the Government returned to their fields looking backward over their shoulders, to see if their successors were already following to displace them.

The country soon became depopulated, and necessities rose to famine prices. Government ceased. There was 'not a shadow' of law or police anywhere; bands of armed plunderers traversed the roads and jungles. A terrible state of affairs; but it did not vex the philosophic Russell. 'Exaction', he cheerfully observed, 'is the necessary vice of every Government, which derives its principal revenue from the direct rent of land. It seems to be universally acknowledged, that the assessment is too high in every country in India: the government demands too much, from the fear of receiving too little . . . even our own Government, with a system the most elaborate and expensive, has hitherto been unable to afford adequate security to the inferior classes of its subjects. Every Indian Government subsists upon its immediate means: it is always from hand to mouth. . . .

'If we owe the foundation of our empire in this country to the

<sup>1</sup>*Sketches of the Relations subsisting between the British Government in India, and the Different Native States*, 55.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

weakness in which we found the Native Powers, we ought not to complain of the evils which that weakness necessarily produces. If we have reaped the benefits, we must submit to witness the inconveniences which are its inseparable attendants.'

Others, however, were less high-minded, and less detached. The reeking disorders seeped into the neighbouring territories of Poona and Ahmadnagar, where British officers drew the Supreme Government's attention to them. This caused representations which disturbed even Mr. Russell's mind, and led him to inaugurate 'reforms' which (he confidently told Metcalfe, when the latter took over) were so effective as to promise to set everything right practically at once.

This, however, was in 1819. Before that date rebellion flared up in the wretched embers of what had once been a population. To suppress it, Russell suggested that the Nizam's own troops should be given British officers and modelled on the lines of the subsidiary force which the State already had to support according to treaty. 'The Russell Brigade' was formed therefore, mainly of Hindus from British India—a force devoted to Company interests and contemptuous of the Nizam's, and staffed by absurdly overpaid British officers. Its Commandant received £5,000, and his subordinates salaries in proportion. 'Poor Nizzy pays for all', was the jest. The Brigade 'must be no inconsiderable burthen' on the Nizam's 'exhausted and impoverished dominions', said James Stuart, in his indignant *Minute* of November 10, 1819. A starved peasantry were crushed, and 'British blood was spilt in this bad business'.<sup>1</sup>

With this new expense, a deserted countryside, and vanished taxpayers, money had to be found somehow. It was found by means of 'William Palmer & Co.'

William Palmer, the Eurasian son of General Palmer and brother of John Palmer, the well-known Calcutta merchant, began his career in the Nizam's dominions in 1799, as a not very successful military adventurer. Educated in England, he had in-

<sup>1</sup>Sutherland, 55.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

sight into both East and West, and was 'peculiarly calculated for the meridian of Hyderabad';<sup>1</sup> at an early date he was employed 'in affairs of some delicacy' by Chandu Lal and Mr. Russell. But by himself he was too inconsiderable to have risen to the superb roguery which distinguished his firm. Probably his respected brother suggested the master-stroke which made this possible—for John Palmer, though no connection between him and his brother's business was ever established, showed fraternal feeling whenever awkward questions were asked. This master-stroke was the accession of Sir William Rumbold, Bart., to the Palmer Board of Directors.

Rumbold, 'a person in whom', said the Governor-General, 'I take a very lively interest, from his having married a ward of mine, brought up nearly as if she had been my daughter', had accompanied Lord Hastings to India as his household chamberlain. He had frankly come to make a fortune swiftly and easily, in the land where the Rumbold name was already celebrated.<sup>2</sup> He started in a small way; Lord Hastings appointed him a Calcutta J.P., on a salary of Rs.1,400 a month. Presently he appeared with George Lamb, also an adventurer from England, as a partner in the petition of Palmer & Co. to be allowed to open a mercantile and commercial agency in Hyderabad. Their aims, they said, were three: to spread a healthy spirit and practice of trade generally; exploit the Godavari forests, and float down logs for shipbuilding; and discover how far that river and its chief tributary, the Wardha, could be used for bringing Berar cotton, the best in India, to the sea, avoiding the tedious and dangerous overland routes and the exactions of zemindars and petty princes. The Supreme Government, through John Adam, sanctioned their establishment, April 22, 1814, and granted a licence, 1816. Russell was instructed to encourage the firm all he could, consistently with his political duties.

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>Sir Thomas Rumbold, connected with the tremendous ramp of the Nawab of Arcot's Debts in the eighteenth century.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

These instructions were zealously followed, and exceeded. Russell's brother Charles, the Residency surgeon Dr. Currie, and Russell's Chief Assistant Sotheby, all joined the firm. These accessions were kept secret, as was the fact that the Resident (also a partner presently) entrusted the firm with large private sums. Dr. Currie was the Court physician, on Rs.1,000 a month, and his help was very useful. The firm's offices were in the Residency grounds, and their business was assumed to be British Government business. Everyone, the Governor-General included, regarded Sir William Rumbold as Lord Hastings's son-in-law.

On June 27, 1816, the firm formally applied for leave to lend money to the Nizam's state, to alleviate the land's distress and the administration's poverty. They asked to be guaranteed in advance against liability to prosecution for contravening Acts of Parliament passed in England to restrain British subjects from lending money to Native Princes. These Acts,<sup>1</sup> with their prescribed penalties for infringement, had been passed because of the abuses which during the eighteenth century fixed deep in the British mind its never-eradicated contempt for India and distaste for the very mention of the name. The Acts forbade, incidentally, the taking of more than 12 per cent. usury. The Palmers pointed out that this legislation had not been intended for people like themselves, but only for unscrupulous persons who took advantage of Indian Princes' necessities to lend them money at exorbitant rates and to acquire undue influence in their territories. Their own firm was solely and wholeheartedly benevolent; they had already floated 3,000 logs down the Godavari, and ascertained that boats could traverse it for 400 miles.

Government consulted Sherer, its Accountant-General. He reported, July 23, 1816, that British legislation, especially that concerning rates of interest, appeared to be confined to the Company's own territory, whereas Hyderabad was an independent state. The Palmers, he pointed out, had an additional

<sup>1</sup>13th Geo. III, cap. 60, sec. 30; and 37th Geo. III, cap. 142, sec. 28.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

protection in the fact that their (nominal) chief partner was 'a native of India'.<sup>1</sup> When this plea was put forward at a stage when the controversy had become exacerbated, the angry Directors replied (November 28, 1821) that 'if a native of India voluntarily limits his rights by going into partnership with British subjects' he became amenable to British law and divested of safeguards afforded by birth and blood. Now, however, Government left the matter to the Resident's discretion.

In a short time, in collusion with Chandu Lal, the Palmers ruled the state unchecked and unquestioned. Their badged *chaprasis* went everywhere, intoxicated with authority. The firm became an agency to collect anyone's debts on commission, and held villages to siege or stormed them, to wring out payment. Hyderabad drew the pitying eyes of the outside world. Its people were 'a broken and oppressed race', said Malcolm, in 1817; 'no country was ever more miserably governed'. Their condition was a pestilence which could not be altogether isolated, and restiveness spread to contiguous regions. Everyone except the Supreme Government knew what was happening.

Government's enlightenment began in 1819, when Chandu Lal 'pretended to want' a loan of 60 lakhs, which the Palmers 'pretended to lend'. The sum was sufficiently vast for the question to be referred to Calcutta, where Metcalfe, as Political Secretary, was instructed to ask (September 4, 1819) for detailed information of sums already paid by the Palmers to the Nizam, with interest and dates. Rumbold, who conducted all negotiations with the Supreme Government, replied, October 7, that 'as mercantile men' they could not 'with propriety furnish copies of our accounts with our constituents'. It would be 'highly injurious to our affairs, and destroy the confidence which the public repose in us'. The Resident was hastily brought in as ally, to submit to the Governor-General-in-Council their 'earnest request' to be relieved 'from the painful state of anxiety in which we are now placed'.

<sup>1</sup>The legislation was against full-blooded British subjects only.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

Lord Hastings thought this eminently reasonable. But from now on his Council began by degrees to revolt from his side. Metcalfe sent their answer, with a dry terseness which indicated his own opinion. The firm, he pointed out, had not been asked to do anything so dreadful as betray their customers' confidence, but merely to furnish information 'respecting a particular measure, sanctioned by the Resident, and submitted by him to notice of Government'.

Rumbold stood his ground. He was unwilling (he said now and subsequently, with unfaltering consistency) to submit 'a transaction, necessarily fashioned according to the peculiar circumstances of the country, to be canvassed by clerks in Europe, who could only measure it by the course of pecuniary concerns at home'.<sup>1</sup> The Governor-General vehemently supported him: 'these pleas appeared to me unanswerable'. Rumbold attended the Council, by request, and managed to convince all but one of his hearers, that the action which his firm proposed would pass, by the not exacting standards of the time and place. That one dissident, however, James Stuart, rebelled with a decision and courage that in the end, reinforced by Metcalfe and then Adam, and ultimately by even Fendall—who was hardly more than the Governor-General's 'yes-man'—routed Lord Hastings. It is to Stuart that the credit of the first stand must be given. In a *Minute*, November 10, 1819, he expressed amazement at Rumbold's impudence. 'Antecedently I could not have brought myself to believe that such an objection could be seriously urged.' The Palmers were absolutely dependent on the British Government, yet refused simple information! He commented on Russell's evasions when asked for this (and quoted devastatingly and at length from his cynical report to the Commander-in-Chief, June 4, 1817, which made terribly clear the Nizam's helplessness).

'Admitting the Nizam's Government was, with respect even to its internal administration, in the full exercise of an independent

<sup>1</sup>These words actually belong to 1822, but Rumbold's line was the same throughout.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

authority, I should still have thought, that this Government had a right to ask an account of any transaction between a Native allied Government and British subjects', especially when those subjects were found in possession of assignments on revenue, to the extent of 30 lakhs. But the Nizam, as everyone knew, was *not* in control of 'that wretched and distracted Government and country'. His 'imbecility and perverseness' had led the British to set him 'in effect' aside, and his administration 'is carried on with despotic authority by a Minister, who is the creation of British influence, and wholly and entirely dependent on the British power'. The whole Palmer business from the first, the Russell Brigade included, had originated with the Resident and had been pressed by him, in a manner not to be resisted. It was preposterous to represent that native bankers, in a great Indian capital like Hyderabad, could not have advanced the two lakhs monthly with which the Palmer loans had begun, 'secured upon the growing revenue of the country'. The firm now had a grip on the whole state. He had hoped, he said bitterly, that Government had meant to 'redeem' themselves 'from the odium of tolerating in dominions where our power and influence are confessedly uncontrollable, evils of maladministration, which I believe to be as great as any that prevailed in the worst of the native Governments, which it is the boast of our policy to have corrected'.

The Governor-General answered in a savage *Minute*. 'I have stated distinctly that there are peculiarities respecting the Government of Hyderabad, which entirely, for the present, preclude the applicability' of the policy of non-interference enjoined from England. The Nizam's 'constitutional irregularity of mind, approaching to derangement, and an evinced propensity to yield himself to the wild councils<sup>1</sup> of the ignorant, profligate parasites about him', made it necessary for the Resident and the Minister to run the state. If this control were relaxed, there would be convulsions of the whole of society.

<sup>1</sup>I prefer to quote as I find the text, without peppering my pages with *sic*.



## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

Lord Hastings further observed drily, that Mr. Stuart was quite right in saying that the troops for which the Nizam was paying as his own were actually British, and that in a rupture they would side with the Resident, against their nominal master and the state which paid them. 'Now, would it be consonant to wisdom, or to the trust reposed in us by the Honourable Company, that we should sacrifice such a security to a casuistical point of equity?'<sup>1</sup>

The Council had consulted their Accountant-General as to the legality of the business. Sherer declared this to be very dubious. Lord Hastings thereupon sardonically owned himself in error in consenting to this consultation. 'We have unfairly betrayed the Accountant-General beyond his depth.' In legal affairs, he was of course very good, an altogether worthy man and deserving of the deepest respect. But 'to implicitly refer to the Accountant-General as a political oracle would be rather an extravagant abandonment of our judgments and our duties'. This put Sherer where he belonged.

Lord Hastings had himself been the strongest in condemnation of the British Resident's usurpations in Oudh, having seen with his own eyes there 'that the sovereign was held in undisguised thralldom', and that the land's disorder and distress were 'far more chargeable to froward interruptions exercised in the name of the British Government', than to the Nawab Wazir's misrule. He had then stated that conditions were admittedly even worse in the Nizam's dominions. Such unguarded frankness began to come home to roost. Moreover, the Directors were writing troubled letters. They thought (May 24, 1819) the sanction of the earlier loan all wrong; 'the power which you have thought fit

<sup>1</sup>Metcalfe in 1829 (*Minute*, May 13) styled this force, which long survived his own period in Hyderabad, 'a sort of plaything for the Resident and an extensive source of patronage at the Nizam's expense, an accession to our military strength at the expense of another power, and without cost to us; an accession of military strength in a conquered empire, where military strength is everything. . . . I cannot say that I think the arrangement a just one.'

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

to exercise could not have been granted by the Legislature, in contemplation of such an use as you have made of it'. They recalled 'the dreadful abuses' from pecuniary dealings of British subjects with the rulers of the Carnatic and Oudh, and reminded the Governor-General that under Acts of Parliament all bonds, notes, securities, etc., taken in defiance of these Acts were null and void.

Rumbold called at Stuart's house, to offer private explanations, which Stuart declared utterly unsatisfactory, remaining as hostile as ever. Adam began to move over to his side, supporting his demand that the Palmers should state what interest they proposed to charge; another Prince in difficulties, the Gaekwar, had been helped by Government to obtain a loan at  $9\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.<sup>1</sup> Stuart suggested helping the Nizam with Government money, the Company having reached one of those rare periods when its coffers were brimming; or else throwing the loan open to competition, there being a 'glut of money in the markets of India'.

Lord Hastings took the line of offended dignity, and said he would take no further part in discussion or voting, as such participation would be misinterpreted because of his close connection with Rumbold. His magnanimity was applauded; but when it became plain that it meant the loan would be vetoed he could not stand to it. He not only voted, he used his casting vote as well. So Metcalfe had to notify Russell, July 15, that the Council by a bare majority had sanctioned a 60 lakhs loan, at 18 per cent. interest.

Then the Governor-General's irritation, already extreme, became goaded into something like settled madness, which never left him again. For the Directors not only criticised the Palmer transactions. They turned down his pet scheme to fleece the

<sup>1</sup>Sutherland points out that Calcutta merchants were lending to the Dutch in Java, at 9 per cent., and says that the Nizam could have easily got all he needed at 6 per cent. interest, except that it was understood that the Governor-General would allow no one but the Palmers to touch his affairs.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

Nizam for the spiritual benefit of British Calcutta. By the treaty of 1802, the Nizam was entitled to equal division of all conquests made by the Company in alliance with him. Half emerging from his deliberate lethargy, after the war which eliminated the Peshwa he claimed the treaty's implementation. 'The letter' of the treaty, Lord Hastings admitted, July 14, 1819, 'favours the claim; but I contend, that the nature of the struggle in which those conquests were made will not admit the pretension'. The assistance of the Nizam's wretched troops had been illusory. Also, by the Peshwa's disappearance the Nizam got rid of a liability of 63 lakhs of *chauth* annually (this figure the Nizam wished to correct to 25 lakhs), as well as a bill for arrears which the Peshwa stated at 12 crores (the Nizam would not admit more than 2, so Lord Hastings decided to compromise on  $3\frac{1}{2}$  crores). The Nizam had, of course, neither the power nor the intention ever to discharge these obligations, and felt no gratitude for being rid of a figment. Because of these obligations, however, he was fobbed off with rectification of his frontiers where the Peshwa's had once eroded them, the land he acquired being valued at perhaps 10 lakhs revenue (the Nizam said this was a generous overestimate, but he was biased). Lord Hastings considered cession and cancellation of the Peshwa's claims together constituted 'a prodigious benefit', so immense that any right-minded man must burn to signify his sense of it and would be grateful to any friend who would point out a way of doing this. Determined to prove this friend, the Governor-General 'felt justified in suggesting what lustre would be shed on his dignity and gratitude, were he to desire that four lacs yearly, for four years, should be applied out of this vast boon to public purposes in Calcutta and its vicinity', notably a cathedral, with a contiguous residence for the Bishop—purposes for which, 'I am persuaded', observed Lord Hastings, with an eye to the weaknesses of the Directors, 'you would speedily find great pressure at home'. 'Should my hint be followed, such a fund would meet objects which would otherwise . . . ultimately fall on you.' 'A spontaneous munificence

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

of this sort' would cover the Nizam with glory and save the Company expense.

Metcalf accordingly, when he went to Hyderabad as Resident, carried with him, in the Governor-General's handwriting, the following statement, for the Nizam to sign:

'His Highness the Nizam, contemplating the great benefits which he has reaped from the late military operations . . . is anxious to manifest his sense of such a boon by a gratuitous contribution. In this view his Highness desires that he may be allowed to furnish sixteen lacs of rupees . . . for public purposes connected with the city of Calcutta and its vicinity.'

Metcalf actually had to present this, and did so, not in person, but by his chief Assistant, Sotheby (a partner in Palmer & Co., though no one suspected this as yet).

The Nizam's consent proved immaterial, when the Directors, whose cynicism the Governor-General had overrated, vetoed the scheme, observing that, whether the cathedral and episcopal palace were needed or not, 'the connection of those objects with the system proposed to be adopted towards the Nizam will more than counterbalance any moral advantage to be derived from them'.<sup>1</sup> They commented also on 'the inconsistency of exacting from the resources of the state such a sum when you represent its finances to be embarrassed in such a degree as to require the aid of a British house of agency'.

This criticism was resented, not only by the Governor-General, but by all his Council (with the exception of Stuart, who had definitely drawn himself aside from all these Hyderabad proceedings, and refused to sanction *any* of them). This was the last time they acted together, and in their anger we can trace the knowledge that they had been caught in a deeply dishonourable course. They wrote back that the Nizam regarded himself as 'unconnected' with his country's administration. 'The only instance in which he has been at all consistent is his hatred of us, and his resistance of every measure in which he thinks we are

<sup>1</sup>Secret Letter, June 22, 1820.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

interested.' He was purely selfish; he had shed tears when the Nawab of Oudh in 1819 accepted from the Company the title of 'King', thereby casting off his master, the King of Delhi, the only King in all India. But would he give half a lakh to relieve the King of Delhi's poverty?—Chandu Lal had asked, when he and Russell had discussed the matter. Chandu Lal had sadly shaken his head. The British Government, troubled to think such meanness existed, had hoped to reform the Nizam and to persuade him 'to open his coffers'. True, they were said to contain only about a crore and a half of private bullion. Still, a crore and a half was a crore and a half, and he was basely keeping it to himself. And his jewels, Mr. Russell reported, were equal to those of any sovereign in the world. He never gave a pice to help the swarming poor of his dominions, whereas every day his Minister Chandu Lal distributed many thousands of rupees, in cash or kind. 'We indulged the notion', observed the Supreme Government, in dignified sorrowfulness, 'of piquing the Nizam's point of honour to a magnanimous effort . . . an act of ostensibly gratuitous munificence, which he would suppose calculated to exalt his name in India.' They had planned to open the miserly recluse's eyes to the blessedness of giving. This noble scheme the Directors had dashed to the ground, from narrow views of propriety.

Metcalf went by sea, and landed at Masulipatam, November 18, 1820. A week later, he was in Hyderabad, the social head of 'a fine body of officers', and of altogether a hundred and thirty or more Europeans, including ladies. It was the beginning of race week, when all was gaiety; and he was received with salutes and a guard. 'I had heard much of the overdoing of these matters at Hyderabad; and was therefore prepared for all the honours I received. The sermon at church was about Aurungzeb, Lord Chesterfield, and Mr. Fox, to the text of "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity".'

Russell inducted Metcalfe round the station. Munir-al-Mulk gave them 'an excellent dinner', November 26, and an entertain-

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

ment 'in very good style'. After dinner Chandu Lal joined them, to watch the nautch. His manners were 'good'. But Metcalfe went only 'because I did not choose to make difficulties regarding what had been customary under my predecessors'; he objected to 'dining with people who cannot or will not dine with us', an objection which many who are far from being 'Imperialists' have shared.

A similar visit followed, to Chandu Lal; and, as was fitting, the real ruler outshone the nominal one. 'The profusion of costly ornamental furniture exceeded everything I had ever before seen.' Dinner and nautch were gilded by brilliant illuminations, and there was a display of fireworks and gas-lights. On December 1, Russell handed over the Residency, which, as Metcalfe sullenly noted, had been built and furnished by the poverty-stricken state with an extravagance that even in India he had not thought possible. The chairs had cost fifty pounds apiece; the furnishings were 'superb beyond any that I ever saw'.

He turned to his first task, the 'gaffing' of the Nizam in that matter of providing Calcutta Christians with a cathedral and palace. Though not yet awake to all the wickedness in which it was confidently assumed he would be a chief actor, he did not like this. However, Sotheby, his Assistant, presently reported, on the unimpeachable authority of Chandu Lal, that 'the Nizam had cheerfully assented' and expressed delight. Metcalfe told Chandu Lal, 'I am sure the Governor-General will be much gratified by the handsome conduct of the Nizam's Government; but that I have also some reason to think that the donation will be declined', which, he added wearily, in his own memorandum for himself, 'I shall be glad of, for the financial interests of the State'. He sent on the Nizam's consent to Calcutta, and began to wonder if his hands would ever feel clean again.

He began to harass Chandu Lal with proposals for regular accounts of revenue and expenditure and an inventory of all lands. He pressed him to stop the 'clandestine allowances to servants, &c., at the Residency', and 'fruits, dinners, &c . . . which

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

come in such quantities as give them the appearance of regular supplies instead of being merely complimentary'. His own staff were in receipt of enormous *douceurs*, and he privately apprised Government that the Nizam's revenues—which supported repairs, upkeep of grounds, all expenses of the Residency, in fact—were paying out anywhere between Rs.1,300 and Rs. 2,000 a month. 'The officer of the escort', he told Jenkins, in Nagpur, March 23, 1821, 'gets a whacking allowance from the Nizam in lieu of bazaar profits, and I have not interfered with it. The compromise which I make with myself is, that I will put a stop to it whenever the present commander may quit.'

He found himself in the midst of what was practically incessant civil war, of a guerilla bandit kind. He went in to his first official Christmas entertainment, a dinner, ball, and supper for the Europeans, fresh from reading Lieutenant Sutherland's report on December 24 that he had had to cut to pieces a large body of plunderers. In the selfish happiness around him, Metcalfe began to detect, and in Sutherland first of all, men in whom pity and shame were working. Together he and Sutherland turned their attention to the districts along the Wardha, whose population had fled in mass to Nagpur. Metcalfe determined that they should be given a general guarantee against oppression, to lure them back.

Rumours of what Metcalfe was doing made the Nizam stir from his self-imposed apathy. When his new Resident saw him alone, January 17, 1821, 'he seemed to derive pleasure from the meeting'. Chandu Lal brought Metcalfe the accounts he had demanded, January 26, and chatted 'very plausibly and sensibly', promising cordial co-operation. Metcalfe, always firm on reciprocity, had stiffened their relations, demanding accounts as his right and dropping Russell's casual manner of always visiting the Minister himself. This stand, 'without any proposition on my part', had brought 'the matter into a better course; and I shall now without scruple visit the Minister on business, as he will also come to me'.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

Observing that expenditure, in the accounts shown, exceeded income by over ten lakhs, Metcalfe proposed drastic economies (despatch of February 21, 1821); a land revenue settlement, village by village, for a term of years; and introduction of a police system. Then he set out to tour the Nizam's far-stretching territory. 'I am moving about the Nizam's Dominions', he told his sister,<sup>1</sup> 'endeavouring to settle them and bring them into order, to stop oppression and misrule. . . . If my efforts succeed, the Good done will furnish a store of enjoyment for the rest of my life.' To his settlement officers he sent absolute orders (March 12) that their first duty was to protect the cultivators from their own Government. *All* complaints, no matter how lowly the complainant, must be heard, and in the last resort sent on to the Resident. The eradication of 'all who prey on the public should be an object of incessant care'. He wrote from camp to George Swinton, in the mid-heats of June, 1821:

'The more I see of the Nizam's country, the more I am convinced that without our interposition it must have gone to utter ruin. . . . As it is, the deterioration has been excessive, and the richest and most easily cultivated soil in the world has been nearly depopulated, chiefly by the oppressions of the Government.'

The moderate revenue which in many instances was all he found possible 'has greatly disappointed the Government, which, not convinced by the depopulation of villages in consequence of ruinous extortion, would have persisted in the same unprincipled course until the rest were depopulated also'. Loss of revenue, however, if confidence were once re-established, would prove only temporary, with a soil so productive. Over 300 villages had been re-peopled since his work began. He had received intelligence of another forty-five waste and deserted villages 'which will be re-peopled on the assurance of this settlement'. Some of the returned had come from as far away as Bombay.

'I mention this as the result of confidence in European charac-

<sup>1</sup> Letter, February 23, 1822 (Clive Bayley MSS.).



## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

ter and interference. Were these to be entirely withdrawn, the country would either revert to its former state of galloping consumption, or its progress to dissolution would be accelerated even more rapidly by the violence of reaction. I have troubled you with a long letter, but the fate of millions hangs on the result.'

Metcalf's system, of Indian agency under the superintendence of Europeans fired by his own passion and remorse, was in after-days caricatured as an example of his unbridled lust for power. He had, it was said, taken sole charge of an independent state, and ruthlessly enforced his will; it was what might have been expected from a man so notoriously domineering! And, it is true, no man in all India stood so immovably for what he believed to be his rights of authority and ceremonial; he refused to be a cipher. But when his predecessor got together a party in England who extolled 'the Russell system' as against the arrogant 'Metcalf system', and when throughout India was bruited the statement that he had been—useful and effective, perhaps, but—masterful beyond all powers allowed by law and treaty and decency, Metcalfe was able to answer conclusively that his critics were liars, and peculiarly impudent ones at that:

'Our interference in every department was ordered by the Governor-General-in-Council. It was exercised by my predecessor according to his discretion, in the way which he deemed most expedient. The European officers under him issued orders by their own authority. This practice ceased under my arrangements, and every matter was submitted for the orders of the Nizam's Government. When I first arrived at Aurungabad, the court of justice established by my predecessor used to hold its sittings at the house of the British agent at that station, and he presided at the trials. This practice was discontinued by my orders . . . whatever notions may have prevailed to the contrary, it was my continual study to uphold the authority of the Nizam's Government, and to prevent the exercise of undue power by European officers.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Swinton (Chief Secretary), August 14, 1826.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

Indeed, the records proved that he had had the fullest sanction of the highest possible authority. Lord Hastings had written, April, 1821: 'Let me take the opportunity, my dear sir, of saying to you how gratifying the prospects are which you hold forth respecting the improvements in cultivation and comfort of the Nizam's territories. I feel keenly the duty of rendering our influence so beneficial, and I thank you sincerely for the generous energy with which you prosecute the purpose.'

Lord Hastings's gratitude was to undergo abatement soon; and there were others who watched gloweringly as Metcalfe unveiled one rascality after another. Malcolm warned him of what was coming. 'You have to fight the good fight, and to stand . . . against all species of attacks that artful and sordid men can make, or that weak and prejudiced men can support . . . you will have great vexation and annoyance.'

Metcalfe at first concentrated on checking the Nizam's own extortioners. He even wrote Rumbold this unsuspecting note: 'I must tell you in confidence that a strong jealousy of the House prevails in some quarters. The grounds of it I have never seen well defined; and I do not myself well understand them. There seems to be a vague sort of apprehension of the consequences of encouraging an European House of Agency or Commerce in the dominions of a native prince, founded on transactions which have heretofore occurred elsewhere. . . . There is nothing personal in the feeling, I am satisfied; and I expect that it will evaporate, as hitherto, in occasional ebullitions.' He had been Rumbold's friend; he had nursed him through illness when his guest at Delhi, and Sir William during a visit to Calcutta from Hyderabad had rejoiced in his unchanged 'cordiality of manner—the same as it used to be at Dihlee'. Lady Rumbold had been enthusiastic in congratulations on his appointment.

The first rattle of musketry began in April, 1821, when Metcalfe proposed to open in Calcutta a 6 per cent. loan, under British Government guarantee, to extinguish the Nizam's debt

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

and recover his freedom of action. The suggestion was received as an outrage, and on Rumbold's protest Lord Hastings rebuked the Resident, pointing out that 'Not long ago the expediency of raising a large sum here for the Company, at four per cent., in order to pay off a portion of the six per cent. debt,<sup>1</sup> was strongly pressed upon me. I rejected the proposition absolutely, because I thought it a cruel procedure to force upon the bondholders the receipt of their capital when they had no means of employing it.'

Metcalfé held to his proposal, replying with yet one more analysis of what must have become utterly tedious to him, the poverty and misery of the Nizam's dominions and the burden which its debts were. 'Their honorable regard for veracity' (of which he became less certain presently) had induced Palmer & Co. 'to acknowledge repeatedly to me that the Nizam . . . might justly pay off the whole debt in a day, without their having any right to complain'. They had cynically added, that the Nizam's avarice saved them from being paid out of his private treasury, and they did not imagine payment likely to come from any other quarter!

By the autumn Metcalfé was aware of a threat by Sir William Rumbold, that 'if I would not agree to any measures for their accommodation, they must come to issue with me'. Lord Hastings (August 27, 1821) took the unusual course of writing him a long personal letter, half appeal, half warning:

'A letter from Sir William Rumbold, which I have received this day, mentions the heavy losses to which the House of W. Palmer and Co. has been subjected through the opinion prevalent in the country of your being hostile to that firm, as well as from a belief current at Hyderabad of your being disposed to work at the removal of Rajah Chundoo-Loll. Any ill will on your part towards the House of W. Palmer and Co. must necessarily be an idle imagination.'

Metcalfé's submitting to the Council his suggestion for a loan, without previously consulting him, seemed an unfriendly action,

<sup>1</sup>East India Company debt.



MAHARAJA CHANDU LAL

*From a portrait in the possession of his grandson, Hyderabad,  
Deccan*



## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

'a procedure in which I was unaccountably neglected'. It had led to 'the renewal of a vexatious controversy, originally brought forward from the view of conveying fallacious impressions to the Court'.<sup>1</sup> Lord Hastings considered the Government guarantee, which Metcalfe had proposed, 'irreconcilable to just expedience' and to law, but this had not prevented 'the peevish discussion that was to be anticipated'. He rebuked Metcalfe for 'depreciatory language' concerning Chandu Lal. 'I must thence not let a day slip in observing to you that I am personally pledged to the support of that individual', since, relying on the Supreme Government's support, he was putting through very fine measures of reform, and 'in a becoming reliance . . . manfully performed his part'. Any step 'tending to render our plighted faith delusive' would be 'decisively overruled by this Government'.

In Metcalfe's retort battle was fairly joined at last. He denied that he was disposed to work for Chandu Lal's removal, though 'it is very true that I think ill, in the highest degree, of the spirit of his internal administration—that I groan for the devastation inflicted on the country by his merciless extortions, and that I cannot love his heartless recklessness of the miseries of the people confided to his charge. I mourn also for the reproach attached by public opinion to the British Government, as if it countenanced the criminalities which its support alone has given him the strength to practise.'

Chandu Lal was conciliating, obliging, supple, and facile in apparent agreement. Also, 'he has rendered us essential political service, and is entitled to our thankfulness in such a degree' (he says contemptuously) 'as, though the connexion has its disgrace, would most probably attach disgrace also to our abandonment of his cause'. The Nizam and his Lordship would both (coupling their names together, in one loop of scorn) probably oppose attempts to remove the Minister, for different reasons—the one because he might think such attempts another encroachment on

<sup>1</sup>The Court of Directors.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

his remnants of power, the other because of his disposition to support Chandu Lal. As for his own alleged hostility to the Palmer firm, it was nonsense. 'There is no family at Hyderabad, with which I have so much intercourse as Sir William Rumbold's.' Lamb had been made his own personal and Residency surgeon, 'in every respect on the most friendly and confidential footing'. Hastings Palmer, who had joined the firm as a new partner, had lent him a house at Aurangabad, from which he was now writing. 'I have accepted without hesitation' this 'personal favor'. William Palmer was 'one of those men so amiably constituted by nature, that it is impossible to know ever so little of him without feeling one's regard and esteem attracted'. 'Notwithstanding the apparent presumption of disputing the accuracy of Sir William Rumbold's apprehension, on a point on which he ought to be so well informed', Metcalfe ventured to doubt if any impression of his hostility to the firm existed. He had just consented 'to extraordinary exactions' proposed by Chandu Lal, to meet obligations to them.

'But I might deceive your Lordship were I to stop here.' And with this warning note he swings into his magnificent attack, after which (he must have known) there could be neither quarter nor cessation without the breaking of either himself or the Palmers. He admits he has sentiments concerning the firm's transactions—sentiments slow in growth, but strengthening with all that he sees—which they may possibly put down to ill will.

'I lament that Messrs. W. Palmer and Co. have grasped at such large profits in their negotiations with the Nizam's Government as place his interests and theirs in direct opposition. I lament that they have succeeded in conveying to your Lordship's mind an exaggerated impression of services to the Nizam's Government, which obtains for them on public grounds your Lordship's support . . . support which for any ordinary mercantile transactions would be wholly unnecessary. I lament that they are so sensible or fanciful of their weakness on every other ground as to be drawing on your

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

Lordship's personal favor on every occasion in which they apprehend the most distant approach of danger, extending their sensitiveness to the smallest diminution, from whatever cause, of their immediate profits—thus forcing on the public the name of your Lordship as the patron of their transactions, whilst these are likened by the world in general to former pecuniary dealings in Oude and the Carnatic. I lament the connexion between them and Rajah Chundoo Loll, because it tends to draw them quite out of their sphere of merchants. . . . I lament their connexion with some of the most profligate and rapacious of the governors of districts, through whom their character, and, what is of more consequence, the British name become involved in detestable acts of oppression, extortion and atrocity. I lament the power which they exercise . . . in an authoritative manner not becoming their mercantile character, acting with the double force of the Nizam's Government and the British name. I lament the continuance of their loan. . . . I lament the terms of the loan, because I think them exorbitant. I lament the concealment of the actual terms of the loan at the time of the transaction, and the delusive prospect held out by which your Lordship was led to conceive it to be so much more advantageous to the Nizam's Government than it really was. I lament the monopoly established in their favor . . . because it deprives the Nizam's Government of the power of going into the European money market, where, with the same sanction, it might borrow money at less than half the rate of interest. . . . I lament the political influence acquired by the House through the supposed countenance of your Lordship to Sir Wm. Rumbold.'

The Palmers had 'nothing to fear from me, even if I have the power to injure them, which is very doubtful. I rather apprehend indeed, that I have more to fear from them'. Metcalfe knew well that he was wrecking his own career, so far as its most cherished ambition went.

But this letter must be quoted yet further. The spirit of his Lordship's letter had filled him with grief and dismay.

'I grieve to find that in an act in which I felt assured that I was performing an imperative duty towards the Government,



## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

and more especially towards your Lordship, I am judged by your Lordship guilty of personal neglect. I despair of removing that impression, for your Lordship would not lightly receive it, nor easily forego it. I lament its existence more than I can express, and suffer the saddest disappointment at such a termination of the favorable opinion with which your Lordship once honored me. I am dismayed, because the tone of your Lordship's letter implies a loss of confidence, and opens to my view the abyss on the edge of which I stand. My situation peculiarly needs the confidence and support of Government. I have to wage war against oppression, corruption, extortion, and individual interests of all kinds. . . . The duties of my station are more undefined than those of any other. Without power to do anything, everything must be done by influence. . . . Interests of all kinds will be roused to arms to oppose the success of my invidious undertaking. Why has it prospered hitherto? Why does it now promise to be crowned with ultimate success? Only, my Lord, because I am supposed to possess your confidence; because I am supposed to act in furtherance of your designs. . . . Hollow, indeed, is the ground on which I stand, if your Lordship is disposed to receive prepossessions of my proceedings and intentions from a gentleman who conceives himself to be interested in their failure. Under such circumstances, simple integrity would not be sufficient to save one from disgrace. One must not only be pure in intention, but faultless in execution. . . . Sir William Rumbold has placed his views on making a rapid fortune chiefly at the expense of the Nizam's Government. He sees, or fancies, that the prosperity of the Nizam's Government must lessen his profits. . . . On Sir William Rumbold's information, your Lordship has judged it necessary to warn me that any step tending to render our plighted faith delusive will not only be disavowed, but decisively overruled. What must your Lordship's opinion have been of me before you would have communicated your pleasure in those terms? But on that I will not presume to dwell. If your Lordship has replied to the same effect to Sir William Rumbold, there is every reason to suppose that he will notify the same to Rajah Chundoo Loll, with whom I shall have the credit of designs which I never enter-

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

tained, coupled with the belief that those designs have been overruled through the report and influence of Sir William Rumbold. This, and everything like this, must tend to increase the difficulties of my situation; but for such difficulties alone I do not much care. . . . My duty towards every one happens to be the same. Whether towards your Lordship, or the Nizam's Government, or Rajah Chundoo Loll, or W. Palmer and Co., it is a clear and straightforward course. My eyes are opened to the dangers to which I may be exposed . . . but I shall still look to your Lordship's justice and indulgence as a shield and protection. . . .'

This was an amazing letter to receive (I know not on what other occasion any Governor-General is on record as having received one equally frank and reckless), and it was not easy to answer. Qualms seem to have troubled Lord Hastings, who at last replied, December 9, 1821, that Metcalfe had done Rumbold injustice and misunderstood his own attitude. Rumbold had merely observed, in an incidental manner, 'in the light of information which would interest me', that his firm has been suffering losses, and that there was a rumour abroad that the Resident was unfriendly to Chandu Lal. Lord Hastings's mind had at once recurred to 'the disparaging terms' in which Metcalfe's despatches referred to that excellent man.

'I feared that, in your dissatisfaction at not finding in Chundoo Loll so perfect an instrument as you wished, you had overlooked the deep engagement of this Government to uphold him. You seemed, through keenness in the contemplation of your plans, to have thrown out of view other collateral circumstances; and I might well apprehend that, were you not duly warned, you might place me in an embarrassing dilemma.'

Had Sir William 'obtruded upon me a secret arraignment of your conduct', it would have been both mean and presumptuous, 'colors which I am sure will never justly attach to any act of Sir W. Rumbold's'. In hinting that Lord Hastings might be encouraging 'a course of underhand comments on your official management', Metcalfe was imputing to him 'a disposition, the

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

quality of which you have not weighed'. 'In short, what you have written is tinctured throughout with misconception.' So let this assurance 'set me right with you, while you thence equally stand acquitted towards me'.

Metcalf showed patience. Palmer & Co. deposed on oath 'that no public functionary at the head of any public office or department ever had any avowed or direct partnership, directly or indirectly, with us, or any interest in our concerns, which could influence him in countenancing our dealings with the Nizam's Government, or give him any means of deriving any personal advantages from them'.

The language of this affidavit is so confused, and so tied up with qualifications, that its value is not clear. However, Metcalfe accepted it as meaning the best he could hope it meant; and 'From the beginning of April, 1821, to the end of June, 1822, I awaited the result of my proposition regarding the loan, and did not once renew the mention of their affairs.<sup>1</sup> They pursued their course without impediment or interference upon my part, and I only claimed the right of pursuing mine with respect to the public interests.'

But in June, 1822, he unearthed an unsuspected additional loan, 'on interest no Government could bear'; and came upon ramification after ramification of almost superhuman roguery. Sir William's brother George,<sup>2</sup> recently deceased, had been getting a pension from the Nizam's resources of Rs.1,000 a month. William Palmer's two natural sons, 'Master John Palmer and

<sup>1</sup>To this statement he should have made one qualification. In May, 1822, he gave Adam confidential information, which had come gradually and which appalled them both. The Palmers' 60 lakhs loan at 18 per cent. interest had been merely to commit the Government to support of them. Nine-tenths of the 'loan' was made up by transference of an already existing debt of 40 lakhs plus a secret 'bonus' of 8 lakhs for their kindness in doing this and plus also another 6 lakhs bonus which Metcalfe himself had agreed to. Moreover, they had privately arranged that the actual interest was to be 24 per cent.

<sup>2</sup>He died, June 17, 1820. His grave is in Hyderabad Old Residency grounds: 'Infinitely beloved, aged 26.' Sir William Rumbold was then 32.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

Master Robert Palmer', at school in England, were getting Rs.1,200 a month each. Hastings Palmer was getting Rs.1,000, and William himself Rs.2,000—sheer gratuity from the generosity of the State for which they had done so much. Rumbold, the enterprise's real head, was confidently said to be getting vast sums, and to his dying day Metcalfe was sure of this. Worst of all, not only had Russell's surgeon been a partner (which was not illegal<sup>1</sup>), but Russell and his Chief Civil Assistant had been hidden partners. Metcalfe told Adam of his discovery.

Adam told Metcalfe that he felt 'very uneasy in the possession of your secret'. How could he keep quiet, while the Palmers' affidavit operated to soothe his fellow-Councillors' minds? Lord Hastings was known to be preparing a *Minute* that stressed Russell's disinterested help to the firm. Adam's silence would commit the Governor-General still more deeply to a desperately wrong position; he begged to be released from his pledge of confidence. Metcalfe consented, but in the name of 'our long-established friendship' begged him to see Lord Hastings privately, conveying his respectful entreaty that his disclosures should not be made 'the cause of public injury to the reputation or interests of those whose irregularities it may expose'.

Metcalfe in July ascertained that the Nizam's debts to the Palmers amounted to over 83½ lakhs. The distressed State had run up other debts also, including over 17 lakhs to native money-lenders. These discoveries enabled Metcalfe to strike back with unexpected effectiveness, just when he was supposed to be beaten. Complaints of his 'dry manner' had come from Hyderabad, and in August Chandu Lal had the impertinence to send through Palmer & Co. animadversions on the Resident's 'unfriendly behaviour'. To Adam, who protested against the impropriety of this, Lord Hastings replied: 'The pronouncing from whom the Governor-General shall receive communications is to make a puppet of him, and my past life has not impressed

<sup>1</sup>Medical officers, as being worse paid than civil servants and soldiers, were permitted to engage in trade.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

me with any sense of peculiar fitness for that character.' He rebuked Metcalfe for 'exaggerated sensitiveness' and unfairness to Chandu Lal. Thereupon Metcalfe called to see the latter, who did not enjoy the visit. Chandu Lal begged forgiveness, putting his palms abjectly together. He said that the Palmer partners had called to demand 5 lakhs immediate payment, so that 'in terror and despair' he had consented to forward through them what had been *their* criticisms of Metcalfe. He reminded Metcalfe how once, when he had stressed his fervent attachment to British interests, he had been sternly told to think of his own master. This, he said, he had taken to mean that he was going to be abandoned to the Nizam, from whom he knew he could not expect the least mercy. Metcalfe thought this 'an extraordinary position', and his sense of humour supported him through a four hours' colloquy. Chandu Lal's 'plausibility is very great, and his manner disarms every angry feeling'. When he sent up to Calcutta the accounts he had wrung out at last, which were of astronomical size and nightmare absurdity, he could not help showing a zestful sense of the comedy that was mingled with the tragedy. Immense stress had been laid on Chandu Lal's high-minded scorn for money. Chandu Lal himself had pointed out that he dispensed vast sums 'for the benefit of the Representative of the British Government and of my own soul'. This charity Metcalfe analysed into 'periodical distributions to idle and worthless vagabonds . . . without discrimination, to get popularity. If his soul has derived any benefit from these unjust squanderings',<sup>1</sup> that was the only benefit that had gone to anyone.

The battle had completely turned Metcalfe's way, and his

<sup>1</sup>Metcalfe would have felt still more sardonic amusement if he could have seen into futurity, to our own time. Every historian can think of instances of utter scoundrels who have ridden away from the judgment of their own countrymen, on some irrelevance. There are British 'heroes' one could cite in illustration of this. And piety (as interpreted by men's otiose and dragging imaginations) is the commonest means of escape. Chandu Lal built a temple, and year by year a festivity in his honour still takes place. He is all but deified, and is (officially) renowned as 'the Hatim Tai' of India.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

victory was hardly impeded by the disingenuousness of Lord Hastings's conduct now. Adam wrote his friend, September 2, a letter whose frankness and nobility make it a pleasure to remember. Metcalfe's despatch of July 29, conjointly with Chandu Lal's letter of complaint, 'appeared to produce a violent irritation and the warmest expressions of dissatisfaction with your proceedings'. One passage was interpreted to imply that Rumbold possessed a mischievous influence over the Governor-General. Adam thought it 'not necessary to dwell on all the hasty remarks that fell from Lord Hastings in his passion'; his anxiety was to prevent anger resulting in action that would make a fool of him. Hastings had not only said Metcalfe's proposed loan was impossible, but, while 'doing ample justice to your motives', had made an 'allusion to your recall'. This did not alarm Adam on Metcalfe's account. 'But such a proposal must have been resisted by myself and the other members of Government, and would probably have produced an entire breach, and it would have covered Lord Hastings himself with indelible disgrace,' though 'it would only have ended in your triumph'. Adam had accordingly gone slowly, with the result that Lord Hastings's eyes had become opened to the misdeeds of Palmer & Co., while still 'receiving and acting upon papers sent through a channel acknowledged to be impure'. Not openly admitting any error, the Governor-General had asked Adam for advice as to what to do next. Adam cautiously seized his chance; dwelt on 'the unrenounced prejudice against your proceedings and the coldness with which your information was received, contrasted with the eagerness with which anything from the House or the Minister was acted upon'; but began to despair of effecting anything unless he made a clean breast of all that Metcalfe had told him. He felt, moreover, that he was exposing both of them to a charge of keeping back facts 'which, just at this time, might turn the scale and rescue Lord Hastings', while their disclosure performed a material public benefit. He was still hesitating, when another despatch from Metcalfe told how Munir-al-Mulk, hoping that

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

the struggle might restore him to actual power, had called to see the Resident, 'an event which, with its assigned object and consequences, was, I have no doubt, punctually reported through the confederates'. Lord Hastings became violent again; so Adam, 'after pondering the matter well, and going over it again and again with Bayley and Swinton', sent the Governor-General Metcalfe's letter which told of the close league between the Palmers and his predecessor.

Adam had dreaded that Lord Hastings 'would assume a high tone—treat it as an unwarranted aspersion of the House, and the other individuals mentioned', and insist on a public enquiry, which would bring about what Metcalfe 'so anxiously deprecated', the washing of Residency dirty linen openly, some of the dirtiest belonging to his own relative, Russell. But when the Council met next day Lord Hastings took Adam aside, and returned Metcalfe's letter, and after good-humouredly asking why it had not been shown earlier 'entered on the subject with the greatest unconcern and ease'. 'He spoke of you without any of that irritable feeling which he had lately evinced', though he still said he 'could not reconcile the *clear* and spontaneous affidavit' of William Palmer and Rumbold and Sotheby 'with the facts stated of the connexion of the latter and other members of the Residency with the House'. He said good-naturedly that he now understood the natural 'embarrassment' of Metcalfe's correspondence with him. Adam handled the matter well: pointed out 'the art and care' with which the affidavit had been drawn up: and admitted that if the weight of evidence could be got over, it would be better to think Metcalfe had been misled, 'than that men could be guilty of such profligate wickedness'. He showed how the truth could be ascertained from Metcalfe's official despatches alone, without going into private letters; and that what would be best of all, would be to close the whole business by paying off the Palmer debt.

Lord Hastings agreed repeatedly. Of course. The debt must be closed in any case. The whole conversation was marked by

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

the utmost calmness and pleasantness; Adam was surprised to see how little the Governor-General was shocked by Metcalfe's letter. But next day he found he had to go over the same ground again. Lord Hastings tried to explain away 'the artful manner' in which the Palmers' affidavit had been drawn up. 'But it was easy to show that it was a pure deception.' The interview ended unsatisfactorily; Adam's letter flags down into sheer weariness.

Obviously, what Adam was hoping was that in some way there might be a reconciliation, before too late, between his friend and his master. There must have been some telepathy between them, for on September 6 Metcalfe wrote Lord Hastings a despairing letter of humble anxiety to regain his good opinion. Up to this Palmer trouble, he had received from Lord Hastings innumerable kindnesses, which he should not forget while he lived. 'What inducement, then, my Lord, could I possibly have had wantonly to excite your Lordship's displeasure by disrespectful or neglectful conduct?' He was unaware of any action which had merited this displeasure.

'It has been my fortune to jostle in the path of my public duty with persons who were there pursuing their private gain. If I had abandoned my duty I should have suffered and merited your Lordship's contempt.' Given an indulgent hearing, he could show that duty and gratitude had no small share in his motives, 'but I have such strong impressions to encounter against me . . . that I desist from the effort in utter hopelessness.' Palmer & Co. had suffered no loss whatever by him. 'The only person really injured is myself, who by their fears and misrepresentations have been cruelly deprived of your Lordship's good opinion.' The proposition he had advanced would have left the firm a clear gratuity of 14 lakhs (he had himself proposed a 6 lakhs bonus, in ignorance of the 8 lakhs already secretly included in the 60 lakhs total) 'upon an advance of about 22 lakhs' for one year, in addition to more than 18 per cent. interest (he now knew, of course, that it would be 24 per cent.) on 60 lakhs for the same period. How could such a proposition be called injurious?



## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

'This is the extent of my primary offence', for which 'they have set themselves in array against me'.

He repeated that he was not—never could be—hostile to Palmer & Co. as merchants. 'I shall always rejoice in their legitimate prosperity.' But he was inevitably opposed to them as an unscrupulous faction. 'I am the local guardian of public interests. They study their own. We are unavoidably in collision. I cannot allow them to trample on the Resident, and reduce him to a state of base subserviency.' 'With so many predilections arrayed against me in your Lordship's warm heart, I despair of making any impression.' If it were otherwise, he would implore his Lordship to restore his confidence and support to him, 'and I would engage that no harm should befall Messrs. W. Palmer & Co. therefrom'. He signed himself, as 'Mourning and deprecating your displeasure, and ever retaining an unalterable sense of past kindness'.

To this appeal, Lord Hastings returned (September 27), an assurance that it had given him 'extraordinary pleasure'. He justified his impression that Metcalfe's manner to him had changed even before he left Calcutta. 'It was not I alone who remarked' it; his wife had commented on it. Lord Hastings had naturally tried to find the reason, and when Metcalfe wrote abusively of Chandu Lal thought he had found it. Evidently Metcalfe considered Government's obligation to uphold the latter 'a shackle on your free agency'. 'It struck me as inequitable that you should regard with sullenness my sense of an engagement which public pressure had forced us to contract. You departed, leaving me with that sensation on my mind.' Metcalfe had then written letters 'full of criminations, sometimes direct, sometimes implied, against Chundoo Loll', an 'apparently studied contravention' of instructions. 'You at once assumed over Chundoo Loll the very tone of despotic rule which I had labored to preclude, rousing unavoidably in him occasional displays of vexation, which you construed as indications of systematic purpose to defeat your aims.'

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

'At this juncture a new light broke in upon me.' The losses which 'your demeanour entailed on the firm of W. Palmer & Co. when the Court<sup>1</sup> had so emphatically expressed its desire that the House should not be injured, were inexplicable, but from some collateral consideration'. He had 'readily surmised' that Metcalfe supposed Chandu Lal to be in league with the House, and they to be counting on Sir William Rumbold's influence. 'This you nearly avowed in writing to myself—omitting the thought, what must be the despicable debility of my character, could I be so unconsciously practised upon, what must be its worthlessness, could I secretly counteract my own official representative.'

Deeply wounded, he had felt a greatly augmented mortification when Metcalfe had put before the Council, without previously consulting him, his proposal for a loan which the Governor-General had previously rejected on legal grounds. 'I naturally thought this a step taken merely to give me annoyance by reviving those contests which Mr. Stuart, on an amiable suggestion from home, spun out' so perseveringly. Lord Hastings, having opened his mind, now expressed dignified and modified regret for having yielded to impressions. 'At the same time, your reflection may lead you to question whether you might not have been more kindly attentive to me. The frank sense of failings is the best foundation for a steadier course. You solicit my confidence. Let us endeavor to re-establish it mutually.' Confidence, however, 'is not created by an assertion of its existence. Were it not for my experience that it is not to be produced in the instant, I would offer it to you at once. . . . I have always so highly esteemed and so sincerely liked you, that it is irksome to me to withhold the fullest pledge. There, then, the matter must rest.' There should be a loan, which should 'set these teasing discussions to permanent sleep'.

This letter fills Kaye with admiration of what he calls its

<sup>1</sup>Lord Hastings's memory misled him here. The Court of Directors as a whole loathed the whole Palmer business, and deeply distrusted the firm.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

'openness and unreserve' and 'genuine kindliness'.<sup>1</sup> And Metcalfe, lonely in Hyderabad, whose European community were so incensed with him, the women worse than the men, was ready to see graciousness in anything that was not sweepingly condemnatory. He replied that his Lordship's letter had restored to him a happiness 'of which I had been for a long time entirely bereft'. In low key, he solemnly explained that it had been duty, duty all along, and nothing but duty, that had made him tell his Lordship frankly what he thought of Chandu Lal. If his tone had ever seemed 'mandatory', it had been 'undesignedly and unconsciously'—though, to check the pervading extortion of the Nizam's dominions, 'very urgent but conciliatory remonstrance has undoubtedly been necessary'. His proposal for a loan he had thought was 'an entirely new proposition', and he had flattered himself that it would please his Lordship. To have wanted to annoy his Lordship 'would have constituted me an ungrateful wretch, totally unworthy of your past or future favor'—often repeated sentiments which Lord Hastings, used to unctuous and undeviating subserviency, took at their fullest value. Metcalfe penitently owned that he must have committed faults of deportment, which 'it requires your Lordship's indulgence to forgive'. He confessed he had ascribed to Sir William Rumbold a stronger hold on his Lordship's feelings than he himself could pretend to. 'I felt that I had no claim, and that my only ties with your Lordship had been kindness on your part and obligation on mine.' He wished, most sincerely, that all this Palmer trouble had never started. He reasserted that the firm had lost nothing whatever by his opposition.

'And thus Lord Hastings and Charles Metcalfe were reconciled.'<sup>2</sup> Hardly. For Lord Hastings at once (October 22) told the Directors that 'a zeal, prompted by the purest humanity, has led Mr. Metcalfe considerably beyond the line which I had proposed for our relations with the Hyderabad state. . . . Mr. Metcalfe has, in effect, taken upon himself the whole Government

<sup>1</sup>*Life of Metcalfe*, ii, 84.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* ii, 87.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

of the country, not by working secretly on the devotion of the Minister to us, but by a direct and avowed superintendence of the territorial settlements.' This would doubtless 'be equally beneficial to the Nizam and to his people', but it would estrange and irritate the better classes. The Governor-General, about to leave India, aware that the campaign was going against him, was taking steps to transfer it to the political and mercantile cliques and cabals in London.

How completely the campaign was lost in India he soon learnt. Adam, November 1, wrote a *Minute* dissenting from the Governor-General's censure of Metcalfe, and modifying his praises of Chandu Lal. On November 19, Fendall did the same, and so did Butterworth Bayley, November 25. Lord Hastings was now alone in his Council.

On December 19, he blazed back. He began by sardonically observing that he had rarely felt more pleasure, since his term of office opened. 'I have sufficiently felt the silent operation of the sentiments maintained by these gentlemen, in clogging political measures'; he had never hoped they would come out into the open in this helpful fashion, and rejoiced accordingly. He talked of 'the little feverish feelings' of Metcalfe's despatches. He sneered at Adam, 'so justly esteemed for high moral sentiments', and found it 'an amiable propensity to regard with confident prepossession the conduct of a person, with whom habits of a close intimacy from early youth have existed'. But this was 'an injurious impulse' when 'carried the length of exacting surrender of judgment, of dispensing with the observance of equity, of justifying breach of plighted engagements, of countenancing direct usurpations, and of assuring unbridled license to a remote proconsul'. That proconsul by his own officers had superseded the Nizam's; he had then surmised a plot between Chandu Lal and Palmer & Co., a conjecture which Adam had 'eagerly' supported.

The truce being shattered, Metcalfe also let fly remorselessly. The Palmers, he wrote, December 6, 'are traders in pursuit of

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

gain by means of their own contriving, fair or foul, according to their own judgments, whether straight or crooked'. On December 20, he put in a second shot. They had usurped 'power and authority no other merchants possess, and which no merchants ought to possess'. Everyone in the Nizam's dominions considered them the government, and the money they drained away tribute to the Company's treasury. When Chandu Lal's complaint had been forwarded to the Governor-General by William Palmer, the last-named had justified his action on the grounds that he was the Nizam's subject, and had been 23 years in his service. In what capacity, then, did he seek the Supreme Government's support? How were they to regard him? As the son of General Palmer, the loyal and distinguished servant of the East India Company? As brother of Mr. John Palmer, the highly respected Calcutta merchant? Or simply as a partner of Sir William Rumbold?

'If Mr. William Palmer were, in any real sense, a subject of the Nizam's Government, his thumbs would have been brought to the screw before now,<sup>1</sup> to extract from him some of that wealth which, owing to British blood, British education, British connections, and British influence, he has drawn in such copious streams from the Nizam's country!'

The firm had conveyed to the Governor-General's mind the impression that they did not get proper support from the Resident. 'The details of this letter will, I trust, amply evince that they do not require my support. Their power here is far above it. They have never, indeed, sought it.'

He had something to say, too, about Chandu Lal and the Nizam's fictitious 'independance'. Of the former's internal rule 'I can never speak without reprobation'. But (he repeats with his customary contempt) Chandu Lal has established claims on the British by sycophantic support, especially at important crises. Nevertheless, there was no longer any justification, now that the Company were obviously paramount in India, for their old

<sup>1</sup>A glimpse into Chandu Lal's methods of government.

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

'divide and rule' habit. They ought to stop trying to get a foothold in a Native Court by setting up a Minister against his Prince. They should fix 'attention on manners, rather than on men', and act cordially with any Minister of the Ruler's selection. 'A Native Government is little else than a great landlord.' He protested against the proposal to abandon the people 'to a reckless and unprincipled extortion', flinging them 'back into the devouring fire, from which they had been so recently rescued'.

Four days later, December 24, he got in his parting broadside. 'When Messrs. Wm. Palmer and Co. want aid and support from the British Government, then they are all obsequiousness and devotion; the humble servants of the Company, who have no existence but in its smiles.' But when the Company's Supreme Government asked them for information, honour and their interests were all against compliance. 'I trust', he says ruthlessly, 'that this will prove a lesson of lasting effect against favouring such establishments with the peculiar countenance of Government.'

On January 1, 1823, Lord Hastings left Calcutta. On December 28, Metcalfe told his sister:

'I have been lately involved in very disagreeable discussions with Lord Hastings, who has behaved very ill to me, from resentment, in consequence of my performance of my duty in opposing the peculations of his Friend, Sir Wm. Rumbold, whose further acquaintance I have been obliged to decline. I have for the first time in my life been involved in strife & enmity, and been made the Mark of Intrigue and Conspiracy—Intrigue & Conspiracy headed by the Governor General, who has been working under ground against me. As yet this unpleasant Contest has been honorable for me, though harassing and painful beyond Measure. It is not however finished—and cannot be so considered until Lord Hastings quit the country—for there is no knowing what his Madness may lead him to do. There is no Security against the Violence and Injustice of a Man of his Character. He has already passed the Rubicon, & exposed himself irremediably—and I well know,

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

that he burns with wrath against the person, who in the honest discharge of public duty has incurred it.'

On January 19, 1823, he expressed himself more strongly still:

'Lord Hastings has quitted India my bitter Enemy. I have been engaged in Official Contest with him for the last six or eight months, and he has done me all the injury in his power. I will not inflict on you a tedious detail of particulars. Suffice it at present to say that I have more cause to be proud of his Enmity, than I ever had to rejoice at his former Good Will. I do not wish to forget he once was kindly disposed—but his latter conduct has been shameful and disgraceful—and as I can never again acknowledge him as an acquaintance, I am pleased to think that I am not under any obligation to him for any solid benefits. He leaves me—that too against his Will—in a situation inferior to that in which he found me; and my fortune has not gained by his former countenance of me. I tried to the last to keep on good terms with him—but all would not do, unless I could forfeit my honor to abet the corrupt peculations of Sir Wm. Rumbold, which I could not. Thence alone our Rupture. Lord Hastings's Reputation is destroyed with all who know the Circumstances.'

Lord Hastings reached England, where his intimate friend was now King, and the contest was renewed with indecent fury. The Directors made him a grant of £60,000, which his partisans considered to be so small because of the Hyderabad dissensions, which had been misunderstood. When the former summed up (January 21, 1824), exonerating Metcalfe, Mr. J. Pattison, angrily contemplating 'all the farrago of loans deemed extortionate, statements of accounts stigmatized as false, and an affidavit hardily termed deceptive', asserted that the Resident, ever since his arrival in Hyderabad, had 'busied himself in casting aspersions'. With 'a restless desire to distinguish himself', he had 'unsparingly assailed the character of everyone who came within his range', and 'indirectly' that 'of the Governor-General, himself his friend and benefactor'. A double line of attack was stressed. Metcalfe had been guilty of un-

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

gracious and ungrateful meanness; and of towering arrogance and usurpation. 'He has given ear to every rumour, and even common report has been enlisted as effective in his hostile array.' 'Desirous of unrivalled power', with 'indefatigable industry' he had collected scandals, 'establishing "convictions" upon them'. He had shammed a 'false delicacy'. But 'nothing can be more jesuitical, than statements that the parties were known to him, while he appears to deprecate the disclosure of their names'. Nothing could be 'more disgusting than this farce', by which the Court had 'determined to go so much into these miserable matters'. Metcalfe had shown no higher quality than 'expertness in feeding the insatiable desire which party spirit had engendered'. He had been habitually guilty of 'unwarrantable encroachments', for which the foolish Directors had rewarded him with 'fulsome panegyric'. 'The strong eulogium pronounced . . . appears to me wholly undeserved and highly dangerous.' The Court's own records showed that the rates of interest on which Native Princes had been accommodated had rarely fallen short of 24 per cent.

It will be gathered that Mr. Pattison did not think much of Metcalfe's character and services. He was not alone. Sir John Doyle considered that Metcalfe was better fitted to be Resident in Bedlam than in Hyderabad. 'All the stories about William Palmer and Co. were merely subterfuges invented for the purpose of concealing the attack on the Marquess of Hastings. They were tubs thrown out to the whale, and only calculated to divert attention' from Metcalfe's real design. Mr. Randall Jackson had an enthusiastic word for Chandu Lal, whose name had been besmirched because of 'the wounded spirit of an ambitious man who had been foiled in his projects, and who had consequently determined on the destruction of those who had offended his pride and crossed his purpose'. General Thornton asserted that if the Governor-General had been guilty of favouritism, it was not towards Sir William Rumbold. Mr. Douglas Kinnaird added similarly scathing comments.

But the Howe Boys charged to their comrade's extrication.



## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

'Honest John' Adam was acting Governor-General, and Butterworth Bayley a Member of Council. A third signatory of that cockahoop letter of exultation to the 'little stormer of Deeg', nearly twenty years earlier, William Henry Trant, in the Court of Directors itself stood up for Metcalfe, with laborious and elaborate sarcasm. He emphasised feelingly their long and intimate connection. 'They were children together. They were at Eton together, under the same tutor, Dr. Goodall.' He ended by quoting Horace's picture of the just and firm-principled man. One way and another, the Court of Directors were made sufficiently aware of the facts to reject Mr. Kinnaird's motion that nothing in the Hyderabad papers 'tends to affect in the slightest degree the personal character or integrity of the late Governor-General'; and adopted a grimly non-committal amendment.

Adam and his Council cut down the Palmer claims to 80 lakhs, which were paid. Sir William Rumbold went into residence at Madras, whence he wrote, June 11, 1823, a very humble letter hoping to be saved from ruin and instructed as to how the House of William Palmer and Company should carry on its future transactions, 'so as to secure the support of our Government through the British Resident'. He had drawn many others into the ramp, borrowing money (for he had very little of his own) at 12 per cent., to re-lend it at 24 per cent. The upshot of the business was that the Nizam was so enmeshed in penury that he lost not merely the vast sums fraudulently drained away but the Berars also, a bitterly rankling grievance concerning which the historian can have but one opinion.

The name of Palmer lay like a constant shadow over Indian affairs for the next two decades. Sir William Rumbold infested the land, malignant and angry, in the intervals of trying to make a party in England, until his death in 1833. The firm went bankrupt in 1828, 'merely from want of funds to meet ordinary demands', and it fell to Metcalfe, as Member of Council, to write the *Minute*, December 11, recording this. The great and respected Calcutta firm of John Palmer, William Palmer's brother,

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

stopped payment two years later. But Metcalfe, despite his vindication by the Directors, never ceased to be on the defensive and had repeatedly to go over and over the old ground. In Hyderabad he always had watchful enemies, eager to find out that he too had engaged in dubious transactions. Chandu Lal remained Minister, and Metcalfe lent a somewhat pessimistic ear to reports that he had reformed, telling Swinton, in 1826, 'I apprehend that his nature cannot be changed. Our interference is a check on him, and he cannot cordially relish it. . . . Too great confidence in his professions, smooth demeanour and facile compliance, might lead to a relaxation of that wholesome distrust and watchfulness which I conceive to be necessary.' Chandu Lal's financial statements were probably bogus. 'In whatever particular he may have an object in deceiving, he will, I have no doubt, have suited his account to his purpose; but the rendering of any account in any detail is a considerable step gained.'

What wounded Metcalfe most was that Russell, whose undeserved reputation he had carefully shielded from exposure, joined loudly in the outcry, and fostered the legend of his own superior methods. When W. B. Martin, a later Resident at Hyderabad, became an adherent of this school of thought, Metcalfe exploded in a letter to him (February 22, 1826):

'You speak of having shaped a course for yourself somewhat different from that which I pursued. You do not, however, say in what the difference consists. You mention an immediate communication with the Minister, in a manner which implies that you regard that as constituting a difference. . . . I communicated immediately with the Minister, until I was so disgusted by his perfidy and falsehood, as gladly to assign the trouble of personally combating them to my assistants. The more you have immediate communication with him, the more apprehensive I should be of your being deceived by him; for he has the plausibility ascribed to Satan, and will assuredly deceive those the most who most trust to him. . . . You are understood to be a great admirer of "Mr. Russell's system". What is precisely meant by that term I do not know; but it is

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

evident that something opposite to my mode of proceeding is intended. I hear also that you have, in the most public manner possible, avowed your respect and admiration for Russell's character and conduct; further, that you admire Chundoo Loll, and defend the conduct of Sir W. Rumbold and Mr. W. Palmer. . . . I can hardly think that the Resident at Hyderabad can entertain such opinions without injurious consequences. . . . But I shall have my consolation, even if I stand alone, and shall not be ashamed of my singularity, in the opinion which I entertain, and the conduct which I pursued, on Hyderabad affairs. . . . My regret exceeds my surprise. I am well acquainted with the state of opinions at Hyderabad. I can conceive what feelings you will have found established there, and how and by whom you will have been beset. The Residency has come into your hands in a very different condition from that in which I found it. You have not seen what I saw; you have not had to feel what I felt; you have not been exposed to what it was my duty to combat. . . . I shall, I acknowledge, observe your course with anxiety. . . . I give to you what I claim for myself, and what I condemn others for not allowing me—I give you credit for exercising your judgment with perfect integrity of motive. I admit and maintain that you must take your own opinions for your guidance, and as you think, so must you act. . . . Mine on Hyderabad affairs are fixed as a rock; and if those of all the world were against me, that circumstance would not shake me in the slightest degree. I do not see cause to retract one word that I have ever said or written against the abominable corruption which prevailed at Hyderabad. I have said, and it is now in print, that it tainted the whole atmosphere. The expression was scarcely figurative. It was almost literally true, for, go where one might, the smell of it was sickening.'

He never lost his passionate interest in Hyderabad affairs, and in the Supreme Council and as Acting Governor-General was every moment watchful of that unhappy state and whenever he could drew attention to the plentiful extravagance and ostentation which continued there. He left it finally and permanently disillusioned, aware that he had achieved very little and that the

## CLEANSING THE AUGEAN STABLES

pillage largely persisted. He made no bones about frankly saying that he believed every native of India was more or less dishonest, for which opinion he had abundant reason. But his experience left him with a poor opinion of most of his own countrymen also, and precious little faith in 'the divinity of man'. When his sister wrote him a troubled letter about his detractors in England, he appealed 'from the erring silly judgments of Men, to the Allwise and Omniscient, the only Seer of Hearts' (October 26, 1826):

'There never I suppose was a subject on which so much delusion prevailed. The most palpable falsehoods are asserted by interested persons, and are swallowed by others who perhaps mean well. The case was to my mind a very clear one, and I never apprehended that I should be an object of attack: my only fear was that others would be overwhelmed with shame and opprobrium. When first I found that my conduct was in any degree questioned by any one, beyond the parties concerned, I was vexed and annoyed—but when I saw the quantity of gross abuse and calumny vomited forth against me I became callous; and this will I think make me callous to any opinions that may be entertained of me at any time. It makes the world seem less amiable, and renders one less affectionate towards it, and more indifferent as to its sentiments.'

## CHAPTER XIV

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

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'That India is only viewed by you as a step-dame . . . is tolerably evident from the whole tenor and complexion of your letters.'—Dr. Goodall to Metcalfe, 1820.

'My only Hobby is the Public Service.'—Metcalfe to his sister Georgiana, July 23, 1825.

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**M**etcalfe's other duties at Hyderabad were so entangled with the Palmer affair, that to tell of one is to tell of the other. He spoke of his task as a cleansing of the Augean stables; it was really a combination of heroic labours, as if Hercules had slain the Hydra in those stables—not in comparatively wholesome marshes, but where new heads emerged from one filth-pile after another. His life, always one incessant task—a shuttle of letters, despatches, minutes; a round of visitations and administration—became a warfare. He learnt that he could not tell his enemies; hostility hid behind smiling faces.

His private life became intensified, withdrawn into mystical personal religion and idealisation of England, and of its countryside in particular. His affection for his sister, who had undertaken the care of 'my poor children', grew humble with gratitude. In early 1823, she married the Rev. Thomas Smyth, Vicar of St. Austell's, Cornwall. That she, whom he hardly knew, and a brother-in-law whom he did not know, should be willing to oversee the education of his sons—in addition to Mr. Smyth's own three young children—moved him deeply. Having no family life, he projected himself into theirs, which presently seemed to him a paradise of calm godly living, a centre of parish charities, a home full of intimate pleasures. He sent, during



GEORGIANA SMYTH  
Sister of Charles Metcalfe

*From a portrait lately in the possession of Sir Theophilus  
Metcalfe, present baronet. Artist unknown*



## THE ELDER STATESMAN

the years that followed, a stream of gifts, of varied and costly character—shawls, bracelets, brooches, jewels. He dwelt more and more on the thought of his own retirement, and of hearing Georgiana playing the instrument which was his first gift towards the furnishing of her home:

‘I cannot refrain from letting you know, that you have gratified me cordially in accepting a Piano.<sup>1</sup> I will not despair of hearing you play both on that and the Harp, a delight, with respect both to yourself and Emily, which I have been hitherto deprived of, though constantly charmed and tantalized by the sound of your Musical Fame. . . . I will indulge the Fancy that the Piano may sometimes bring Charles to your mind.’<sup>2</sup>

While Georgiana’s prospects excited him with happiness, those of his other sister, Emily, Viscountess Ashbrook, distressed him. In 1822, she and her husband separated. ‘God grant that she may have strength of mind and proper conduct in her present delicate and perilous situation.’ The separation he took with sense and emancipation of mind. ‘I lament the cause of the separation more than the separation itself—for the latter is almost the sole remedy where there is an incompatibility of Temper.’<sup>3</sup> But he knew it meant emotional strain. Lady Ashbrook, who was celebrated for her beauty and her skill on the harp—with those famous lovely fingers (which she displayed with pardonable vanity) she played to George III in his derangement—lived on until she died in lonely extreme age, at 93.

His eldest brother Theophilus had brought back from China a broken constitution; after delusive appearances of recovery, he died, August 14, 1823. ‘Every Recollection of early life includes him as a part of the picture.’<sup>4</sup> He had been an excellent brother, kind and selfless through long suffering. Charles succeeded to

<sup>1</sup>He recurs to this repeatedly: ‘your affectionate kindness in accepting a Piano. . . . I need not say how much I am pleased that it adds to your truly sensible enjoyment’: Clive Bayley MSS.: July 4, 1823.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*: December 28, 1822.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*: January 19, 1823.

<sup>4</sup>Letter, March 24, 1823: *Ibid.*



## THE ELDER STATESMAN

the baronetcy, and to life interests in the country estate at Fernhill, Berkshire, and the town house at Portland Place.

His children gave him anxiety. Studholme, who was fourteen (November 12, 1823), was disinclined to exertion, while prone to paroxysms of rage. 'It is time', wrote his father, May 21, 1823, 'to think about a profession for Studholme, and a suitable finish to his education. . . . I am a great advocate for prolonging Education unless it be of importance that he should enter on the duties of his profession very young. He is too old to commence at a Public School. Indeed I am afraid of English Public Schools & English Universities for they are apt to give habits of Expense, and, what is worse, if these are not largely supplied, habits of pecuniary meanness. I have a good opinion of the Scotch Colleges; but at this distance cannot know much about them.' He asked his sister to get him likenesses of his three boys, 'not expensive paintings, but sketches, full length, either in Pencils Crayons or Water Colours . . . such as I suppose may be done for a few Sovereigns each.' What was Studholme's bent? 'In any reasonable desire I shall be willing to gratify him. I do not recommend his coming to this Country, out of The Company's Service, and there is no chance of an appointment in it.'<sup>1</sup> 'I perceive . . . that timidity stands in his way for all the bustling professions, and that he does not make up for this by an extraordinary Talent or Taste for Application. So that there is no promise of eminence in any Line. He has got a promise from me that his inclination shall be consulted in the choice of his destiny, and as far as my means will admit, that promise shall be adhered to. I am very much pleased with Mrs. Courtis's kind care of little James. It could not have been more tender, if she had been a near relative.'<sup>2</sup>

In the spring of 1825, when Georgiana's own first-born was a year old, he took the occasion of his friend and agent Brown-

<sup>1</sup>May 21, 1823: Clive Bayley MSS. Studholme's mixed blood made any employment by the Company practically impossible, except in subordinate lines.

<sup>2</sup>July 4, 1823: *Ibid.*

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

rigg's going to England, to relieve her 'from a charge, which, though you do not say so, must I am sure be troublesome—I mean the charge of my Boys, to whom you have been for so many years as the kindest of Mothers.'<sup>1</sup> Her affection had moved her to offer to continue this service after her marriage, and 'I was too sensible of the advantage of your protection for my Boys, to hesitate to comply'. But he had often thought since, that he had taken 'an unfair advantage of your goodness'. She had charge of three families, including his and the one acquired with her widower husband. 'I need not bespeak your continued kindness to my poor Boys.' But Studholme had reached 'an age which requires a Man's tutelage' (and his father had no right to impose this burden on Mr. Smyth).

On June 2, 1824, he sent a letter to little Frank, in answer to one from him. Frank, the shadowiest of these three sad figures, called out a special tenderness. We know nothing of him, except that he was born, lived a few years, and then died, it is believed in India. He is merely a name in the correspondence of a father who knew that society would not approve their relationship; a child motherless almost from birth and fading away into silence.

There is a great deal in these letters about Metcalfe's impending return to England. For at least fifteen years before the close of his Indian career, he was like a bird poised for flight; half his thoughts were elsewhere. On June 21, 1824, he is staggered by 'a Flemish account', which shows that Fernhill while unlet would be a dead loss of £500 annually. Yet he thanks Georgiana that she has kept up its charities. Brownrigg, his agent, tells him he may retire when he has £5,000 a year—a distant prospect, for he had long been losing money, in a variety of entirely honourable ways. A calculation made of the period from September 1, 1820, to April 30, 1824, showed his average monthly expenses at Hyderabad had been Rs.10,220, against a monthly income of Rs.8,053. In April, 1825, he rejoices that Fernhill has been let.

<sup>1</sup>July 26, 1824: *Ibid.*

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

The flood of wrath that assailed Metcalfe's name in England and his brother's death reminded many of him, after a period of comparative forgetfulness. They quickened the affection of others who had not forgotten him. Among the latter was Dr. Goodall, Provost of Eton. He was of those who received a steady flow of gifts from Metcalfe, including a matchlock, which he used 'as a kind of hyphen, connecting the lower extremities of two portraits—one of his Excellency residing at Hyderabad, the other of the Prince of Pekoe and Hyson' (this was before Theophilus's death). Dr. Goodall kept in touch with Charles by letters, a rich compost of all the sciences and classical languages, which Kaye applauds for their witty playfulness. 'The worthy doctor writes pleasantly of the conchological distemper that had broken out upon him, and beseeches the Nabob to send him a few shells from the Oriental world':

'Oriental literature I have disclaimed; Nimrod's propensities are not mine. To the black-lettered Bibliomaniacs I own no fellowship. My limbs are not supple enough to become an active Lepidopterist . . . my rage is an accumulation of certain modifications of calcareous matter, generally known by the name of shells. Now, should you in your travels chance to light upon any of the testaceous gentry who inhabit the waters of the eastern rivers . . . put by a few of them, in a small wafer-box, marking their habitats.'

In February, 1821, Dr. Goodall chides Metcalfe for overlooking an Etonian triumph. 'What? did no curved sylph, no triangular gnome, whisper or bellow on the banks of the Gunga, that Lefevre, an Etonian, was the senior wrangler of his year?' He is delighted to hear of the annual Calcutta dinner, 'when *Floreat Etona* is "hipped" with three times three':

'The report of your filial attachment to our common mother gladdened the heart of a septuagenary . . . who, with tears in his eyes, though not without a little Oriental amplification, declared that thirty years ago, at a similar meeting, the same pious words were echoed with such appalling reverberations, that all the

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

crocodiles in the neighbourhood, smitten with terror, plunged themselves into the sacred stream.'

He sends 'grateful acknowledgment of their kind partiality' to the Bengal Etonians, 'from the *venerable* Leycester (by-the-bye, are you sure that he is ycleped George? if he be the "Scagger" I wot of he bore another name of yore) to the youngest "sage" of the company'. He chaffs Metcalfe continually for his spelling 'Dihlee'; laments that 'your kind conchological present' has apparently been 'purloined by a Triton' on its passage; and later exults that all except 'the more fragile bivalves', which the Customs people had smashed utterly, had reached him.

'My petition was for pieces of brass, and you have enacted Jupiter Pluvius, and showered down gold on me. I begged for a few inhabitants of your rivers, and you have transmitted me, in profusion, the spoils of the ocean.'

Dr. Goodall could, however, write with a moving simplicity, as in the fine letter which tells of the sensible and sensitive manner in which he was confronting 'the gradual approaches of old age'. And nothing comforted Metcalfe more than the grave kind letter which showed how much pains his old master had taken to enter into his difficulties, and how entirely they agreed that only the effort to do duty honestly mattered:

'You cannot draw on a surer bank for happiness than from the consciousness of not only meaning, but doing well. Yet, alas! human nature is on the whole everywhere so far the same, that the great mass of mankind are self-interested and ungrateful.'

Lord Hastings's departure brought an easing of Metcalfe's position towards the Supreme Government. He felt encouraged to take up again his rôle of elder statesman, and sent the new Governor-General, Lord Amherst, a long *Minute* (June 8, 1824) on the Burmese War. This had opened with a disaster at Ramu, on Bengal's eastern frontier, which Indian opinion, hardly recovered from the long-drawn-out surprise of the Gurkha War, absurdly magnified. In a native paper Metcalfe read that the Commander-in-Chief had been killed near Calcutta, and 'your

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

Lordship had put an end to yourself by poison'. Henry Lawrence, a newly arrived subaltern, reported that there was a panic that the Burmans had taken Chittagong and were pushing up the Hugli in their war-boats.<sup>1</sup> Anyone who has been in India when Great Britain was at war will remember similar bazaar beliefs. There is nothing surprising in their existence, a century and more ago. What is surprising is that Metcalfe should have taken the Burmese so seriously, even from his remote station in Hyderabad. He talked as if Gurkhas and Burmese were foes of equal quality; and reaffirmed his unwavering conviction that British rule was universally detested:<sup>2</sup>

'All India is at all times looking out for our downfall. The people everywhere would rejoice, or fancy that they would rejoice, at our destruction; and numbers are not wanting who would promote it by all means in their power. Our ruin, if it be ever commenced, will probably be rapid and sudden. There is, perhaps, no other power on earth, judging from the superficial nature of our tenure, between whose highest elevation and utter annihilation the interval would be so short. "Aut Caesar aut nullus." From the pinnacle to the abyss might be but one step.'

The Barrackpur mutiny (October, 1824) was news 'of the blackest hue and the most awful omen, such as for a time must necessarily absorb all the faculties of a man anxiously alive to the dangers which beset our empire in India'. The staunchness of the native army he always regarded 'as a portent'—it was inexplicable, probably delusive, in any case founded on nothing deeper or stronger than self-interest and the absence of patriotism. It seemed 'an awful thing to have to mow down our own troops with our own artillery, especially those troops on whose fidelity the existence of our empire depends'. We might get over the event; he hoped we should; but he was very doubtful. 'The whole business is very bad; and we shall be very fortunate if it lead to

<sup>1</sup>Edwardes and Merivale, *Life of Henry Lawrence*, 35.

<sup>2</sup>Similar testimony is borne by Heber in his *Journal*, *passim*.

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

nothing more. But we are often fortunate; and the mind of man is an inexplicable mystery.<sup>1</sup>

His triumph over Rumbold and Hastings had made him again the unquestioned head of the Hyderabad European community, where he wielded the patriarchal authority in which he delighted. This was his day's arrangement, which gave him some hours 'free from interruption', though it is hard to see how:

'I rise at daylight, and after a short ride & short walk get settled to Business at 7 o'clock. From that Hour to 12 I work. The Business of the Day is generally got over in that period. After dressing bathing &c. I meet my Family at Breakfast. We sit down pretty regularly at one o'clock, and as they have business also, they enjoy the long mornings as well as myself. No one however is bound to starve so long, and most or all of us have a little Tea and Dry Toast in our own rooms at an earlier hour. The Cares of Business being lightened for the Day, our Breakfast is a very pleasant Meal, tho' generally disturbed by Visitors. Dinner is at 5 o'clock for the Family—but I always dispense with this Meal as I find eating twice a day quite sufficient. The interval after Breakfast till 7 o'clock, I occupy in business, if necessary, or in reading. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 7 or 8 I join the Family, & any Strangers that may have dropped in, and we have Cards or Billiards till 9, when we sup, and go to bed generally between 10 & 11. This is the Mode of living that we have lately taken to, and we all like it. Occasional Balls, Suppers &c. to the Society, which consists of about two hundred persons including Ladies, discharge my duty in that respect. The Residency is spacious enough to entertain even a larger society. It is a magnificent and uncomfortable pile, on which immense sums have been unconscionably squandered by my Predecessors, at the expense of The Nizam's Government.'<sup>2</sup>

It was all so unsuited to his habits, that he was thinking of building himself a cottage in the country, 25 or 30 miles from

<sup>1</sup>November 19, 1824: Clive Bayley MSS.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*: letter, August 2, 1823.

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

the capital, a project from which only the expense deterred him. So long as he lived at the Residency, 'it will be a public house; and as long as the billiard-table stands, the Residency will be a tavern. I wish that I could introduce a nest of white ants secretly . . . and cause it to disappear.'<sup>1</sup>

While he was rejoicing to his sister that he had enjoyed so many years of health and was now better than ever, his first breakdown came, in the autumn of 1823. The inevitable reaction from his battle with the Governor-General and the Palmers, it coincided with sweeping criticisms of his government of Delhi, by the Board of Commissioners sent to report on the administration of the Upper Provinces. Metcalfe deeply resented and never forgave the cocksureness and severity of Ewer, their leader. A man unaccustomed to illness bears it with impatience, and Metcalfe fretted because he could not shake his off. Neither medicine nor bleeding helped. The news reached Calcutta, and Lord Amherst in October sent his official yacht, carrying Martin, a brilliant young doctor. Metcalfe was urged to return with him and see Simon Nicholson, the most celebrated doctor in India. He consented; 'the sea voyage and Nicholson's advice together may effect a perfect cure'. Wells and Bushby, two of his young assistants, accompanied him, 'for fun', but in reality from anxiety and loyalty. He was a much misrepresented man. But also, a man unusually loved.

He reached Calcutta, December 21, for a royal visit. He raided the bazaars for costly gifts for sisters and friends. He made the acquaintance of Heber, who did not 'look the Bishop so much' as his predecessor Middleton did, and was more generally liked. 'The wits of Calcutta call him and his wife "Heber and Sheber".'<sup>2</sup> At the end of February, 1824, the Governor-General's yacht took him back, restored in health. He had set up with Lord Amherst, a somewhat stately person (but not stiffly and conceitedly so, as Lord Hastings was), relations marked with

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.*: letter, December 17, 1824.

<sup>2</sup>Presumably 'He-Bear and She-Bear': *Ibid.*: December 10, 1824.

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

deferential respect for himself. 'I am happy to tell you that my daughter did not suffer from the Ball. We often talk over that most agreeable entertainment.' Everyone, Amherst emphasised (April 2, 1824), wished for Metcalfe's complete and quick recovery.

Metcalfe had returned to an office table covered with 'the works of Sutherland, Campbell, Baxter, and Co.', to the everpressing job of governing Hyderabad while trying to make it govern itself. He could find time for letters to younger men, however; they were writing from every part of India, with admiration and requests for advice. What should they read? What ought they to think—about that most absorbing of all questions to the young—their own souls, their own temperament and minds? He told them. He passed into an Indian summer of new friendships.

What he told them most of all was of something that had come to him recently, a deep religious passion. His loss of faith in man—or rather, of exaggerated esteem for man—had driven him to the finding of God. 'If I am really the happy man you suppose me to be', he told one correspondent, March 21, 1825, 'I will tell you, as far as I know myself, the secret. . . . You will perhaps smile, for I am not sure that your mind has taken the turn that might induce you to sympathise. But be assured that I am in earnest. I live in a state of fervent and incessant gratitude to God for the favors and mercies which I have experienced throughout my life. The feeling is so strong that it often overflows in tears, and is so rooted that I do not think that any misfortunes could shake it.'

War was reawakening near his former haunts. On April 16, 1825, the Governor-General wrote him a humble letter, begging him to return to Delhi. 'I hesitate not to say, you can, of all men in India, most benefit your Government and your country.' Ochterlony was sinking into melancholia alternating with wild excitement; he was a cripple with gout, 'carried from chair to Court'.<sup>1</sup> He had written to Metcalfe, October 24, 1823, that for

<sup>1</sup>April, 1824: Satara MSS.



## THE ELDER STATESMAN

the last twelvemonth he had been 'sometimes better, sometimes worse—but seldom, perhaps I might say never, well'. 'If the wicked Rajpoots would cease from their iniquities', he thought all this might pass. The Government were anxious to trap or coax him into retirement that would be absolute and final. Ochterlony knew this; and the irony of his helplessness lay in the fact that the one man he trusted, and to whom he confided all his troubles, was the man his superiors longed to appoint in his place. The deep friendship of the two men was well known; and the Political Secretary, in the official offer of Ochterlony's post (and of much more than his post), which was reinforced by the unusual honour and pressure of a simultaneous personal appeal from the Governor-General, concluded:

'To prevent any misconception on your part, I am directed to state to you distinctly that the question of Sir David Ochterlony's retirement does not depend on your accepting or declining the proposal now made to you. If Government should be disappointed in its wish to avail itself of your services as his successor, it must then look to the next man.'

Government promised 'to fix your allowances on the most liberal scale, such as will indemnify you for the expense and inconvenience incurred by you in removing from Hyderabad to so distant a point as Delhi, and which will at the same time correspond with the high and important post now to be confided to you'. This arrangement Metcalfe might settle conversationally when he reached Calcutta, or in any other way that he preferred. He was to be styled Resident, with a subordinate of his own selection performing the work of civil administration, subject to his superintendence. He was to be left free to exercise a wide-roving supervision that included the Jat state of Bharatpur and the Rajput states.

Wellesley's wars had left one question, in India's judgment, undecided. The spectacular and repeated failure before Bharatpur had gone deep into the land's secret thought. The European was not invincible; there was one fortress he could not storm!

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

This fortress now gave Government the chance it had been seeking, of forcing Ochterlony's resignation. In the beginning of 1825, there was a disputed succession, a certain amount of regicide or suspected regicide, and finally the usurpation of the Bharatpur *gadi* by the uncle of the prince whom Ochterlony had acknowledged, a child six years of age. Ochterlony published a proclamation, calling on the Jats to stand by their proper ruler, and prepared to rescue the latter by force. He was checked by the Supreme Government, and censured, a manoeuvre which caught the intended result, his resignation. 'I felt myself abandoned and dishonored', he wrote to Metcalfe; 'for all their sophistry and tergiversation cannot do away one fact . . . I could not, in coarse Billingsgate, express my opinion of what I still think evident.'<sup>1</sup> The Government, which had authorised his original investiture of the Raja, now condemned him for acting on the assumption of its validity—'a palpable bit of hypocrisy and dissimulation'. He felt most of all that this treatment had been meted out to a very sick man. If they were bent on getting rid of him, a hint, if it had been kindly, 'would have been quite sufficient, as I have ever been too proud to force my services where they were not acceptable'. He solaced himself with the thought that he could still live on at Delhi, under the protection of his dearest friend. 'The only gratification I have experienced in all the injustice and hypocrisy I have met with is, that they have selected you to repair and remove the evils which have long been prevalent *here*.' He intended to reside still in the pleasant Shalimar Gardens, where he and Charles should often 'rusticate' together, sharing that easy unconventional life they both loved. *Dis aliter visum*. The old man wandered off to Meerut, where he died, July 15, 1825.

Metcalfe would have preferred 'remaining quietly where I am'.<sup>2</sup> But the call of duty 'must be obeyed, at whatever cost to private feelings. I am surrounded by beloved and affectionate Friends. . . .

<sup>1</sup>June 15, 1825.

<sup>2</sup>Clive Bayley MSS.: July 23, 1825.

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

My principal troubles are over. Peculation and Corruption have been routed—Oppression has been put down—and Success and Prosperity were about me, and before me, only requiring steady perseverance for their completion. These prospects I must abandon, because troubles and difficulties in the other extremity of our Empire have persuaded the Government to call on me.' He felt 'painfully' his 'approaching separation from my friends'. He had 'looked forward to the assemblage of all I love, and a happy time during the rains—our labors in the country to be afterwards resumed'. Instead, he journeyed by palanquin to Bengal, through the pouring monsoon; and reached the capital at the end of August, ill and exhausted.

He was angry on Ochterlony's account. Remorse was stirring in those who during his lifetime had reluctantly acknowledged the dead man's achievements, and on September 26 Metcalfe presided over a committee which discussed schemes to do some posthumous justice. The Ochterlony Monument was the result, the most far-visible and impressive of the memorials on the *maidan* of the 'City of Palaces'.

Meanwhile, in the slow-moving India of those days things were gathering for a major campaign again, to which Metcalfe on August 26 received formally his new appointment. Above and behind it was an infinite deal to which he never received any formal mandate, but which all men freely conceded to him. Everyone knew that, though not a Member of Council, he was far more than any actual Member was, and that his elevation to the Council, long imminent, was withheld only because he was being sent to more immediately urgent affairs. Should the Company go up and smite Bharatpur? Lord Amherst put the decision of war or not-war into Metcalfe's hands. His opinion, given pausingly and with measured consideration of *pro* and *con*, was, Go up and smite it. He brushed aside Ochterlony's Investiture of the young Raja (now his uncle's semi-prisoner) as heir apparent: 'I do not attach any peculiar importance' to it. The Company had no positive treaty engagements to interfere in Bharatpur's

concerns. But by the *fact* of paramountcy, they had their 'duty as supreme guardians of general tranquillity, law, and right, to maintain the legal succession'. He gave judgment, too, on minor disputes between the Company and the Rajput States of Alwar and Jaipur.

'Paramountcy', that major doctrine and point of controversy in India to-day, had emerged full grown. Its makers were Metcalfe and Ochterlony. Five years earlier, the latter had written to his friend: 'I hope His Lordship will in Virtue of his Power & Paramountcy forbid all future Invasions of Surhoie & fix himself a Sum which the Rajah *must take*.'<sup>1</sup> The doctrine had slowly taken conviction during those long years when they had watched the confusions of Central India, an unceasing battle, though of pigmies. They had discussed it in letters and talked it over in Metcalfe's Shalimar retreat or in Ochterlony's camp, while some brown-skinned light-handed Phyllis saw that their hookahs bubbled rightly and sherbets and wines of Shiraz were within reach. Metcalfe was all for a *moderate* exercise of 'paramountcy'. But the present-day doctrine was set out over a century ago, in this Bharatpur *Minute*, with a simplicity and clarity never equalled before or since. He thought there might be 'eventual causes of war with each of the three States mentioned', and made it plain that he believed war with Bharatpur might be a very good thing. The prince, a helpless child, must be replaced, and 'a display and vigorous exercise of our power, if rendered necessary, would be likely to bring back men's minds in that quarter to a proper tone; and the capture of Bhurtpore, if effected in a glorious manner, would do us more honor throughout India, by the removal of the hitherto unfaded impressions caused by our former failure, than any other event that can be conceived'.

The importance of this *Minute* was not overlooked by the Court of Directors later,<sup>2</sup> when all was over and the hurlyburly done. 'The high sense' which they entertained of 'the ability and

<sup>1</sup>March 21, 1820: Parasnis MSS., Satara.

<sup>2</sup>March 26, 1826.

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

services' of Sir Charles Metcalfe made it 'only the more necessary that we should distinctly express our dissent from his opinions', whereby he 'endeavored to establish the necessity and propriety of British interference in the succession and internal concerns of independent native powers'. They could not admit 'that the extension of our power by the events of the years 1817-1818 has in any degree extended our right of interference'. If the most numerous and powerful party in any state wished to make a change in the order of succession, 'we have neither the right nor the duty to act as "Supreme Guardians of Law and Right"', and as such to constitute ourselves judges of the validity of the title of the person who exercises the functions of Government'.

That decision, however, came a little late. On September 16, 1825, the Governor-General-in-Council resolved to restore the Bharatpur succession, and the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Combermere, was directed to hold in readiness a force adequate to reduce the state's fortresses, 'and for carrying on military operations in that quarter, on the requisition of the Resident, Sir Charles Metcalfe'. Metcalfe wrote letters to the usurper and others, which aroused delight and admiration—not, perhaps, in those who received them, but throughout European Calcutta. 'His Lordship' said that Metcalfe's Jaipur letter 'was the first letter on this puzzled subject which he could understand'. 'You know my sentiments as to your way of doing business with native gentlemen,' wrote the Chief Secretary, George Swinton. 'Poor Doorjun Saul<sup>1</sup> has caught a Tartar in you, and knows it, I dare say.' Metcalfe's letters were 'models of correspondence with native chiefs'.

The man who had forced Ranjit Singh to a retirement and a treaty left Calcutta, with peace or war in his sole hands, and on December 6 authorised the Commander-in-Chief to advance on Bharatpur. The Raja's terrified letters were duly read but made no difference. His enemy came on, majestic and pitiless.

Metcalfe was all for a siege and adequate artillery preparation.

<sup>1</sup>The Bharatpur usurper.

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

To his astonishment the Commander-in-Chief and General Nicolls, the second-in-command, had to be restrained from premature headlong attempts to storm, such as had brought disaster formerly. Metcalfe was much impressed by the testimony of an old Indian who said that in 1805 the British columns in their carelessness had looked from Bharatpur defences like marriage processions. 'If I had the Military Command', he told his sister, January 10, 1826, 'nothing should be left to chance that can be secured by mortal means at whatever cost of time and patience.' He got his way, and was able to write that he was listening to 'the Batteries thundering in my ears and vomiting their Iron War against this tough fortress, the scene of former disaster, at which I was present 21 Years ago'. He was anxious for friends—Nicolls, who might fling away his life as Gillespie had flung his away at Kalunga; and Sutherland, his staunch second at Hyderabad, who had been brought by him here. Remembering his own unauthorised recklessness at Dig, he dreaded Sutherland's ardour. 'It will carry him into unnecessary danger.' Perhaps he was needlessly nervous, writing pessimistically:

'We are not getting on here as I like. At one time we were; and I had great hope that the place would be taken scientifically, without risk or loss. I have now no such expectation. We are to storm soon—and with the usual uncertainty. . . . What we have brought together our large means for I do not understand, if risk is to be incurred at the end of our operations. It would have been better tried at the beginning. We might have taken the place in the first hour; and we may take it now. But much as I shall rue it, I shall not be surprised if we fail. . . . My opinion will not be altered by success, for I shall still consider it as the work of chance. We ought not to leave anything to chance, and we are doing it with regard to everything. Either our boasted science is unavailable or unavailing against Indian fortifications, or we are now about to throw away our advantage. . . . God save us from the not improbable consequences of our folly!'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS.: January 6, 1826.

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

It is hard to see what he thought the Army authorities should have done, that they did not do. Three mines were exploded, early on January 18, one of them sent up by ten thousand pounds of gunpowder, an earlier 'Messines Ridge'.

'It was a glorious affair, and our success was most complete. Sutherland accompanied General Nicolls. . . . It was a proper place for Sutherland, and I could not object. . . . One of the mines was sprung immediately before our advance, and blew up the north-east angle of the place. It had been carried under the ditch, and was the work of many days. The enemy does not seem to have been aware of it; and altogether they failed in countermining us, and did nothing themselves very creditable in the way of mining. Our first mines were bungling, but the latter ones were very grand. That to the right did a great deal of mischief to ourselves, for the people assembled in the trenches were too near, and the explosion of the mine took effect afterwards. It was a grand sight, and was immediately followed by that of the advance of the storming columns up the two grand breaches. . . . Both mounted the breaches steadily, and as quickly as the loose earth and steepness of the ascent would admit, and attained the summit without opposition. It was a most animating spectacle. I had posted myself where I saw the whole perfectly. . . . I congratulate myself on having done so, for many about the Commander-in-Chief were killed or bruised by the explosion of our mine, and his own escape was surprising. The other forts of the country are falling without opposition. I trust that the effect will be good everywhere.'

To his sister he wrote in even more exultant strain:<sup>1</sup>

'All India was looking on, and we almost staked all India on the result. Bhurtpore . . . was regarded by all India as an insuperable barrier to our power. From Cape Comorin to Cashmere, and further still, the name of Bhurtpore was in the mouth of every Native as a Taunt against us. I had the misfortune to witness our defeats in 1805. I have had ample revenge in participating in our present glorious victory. Never was anything more complete. We carried the Fort by Storm.'

<sup>1</sup>January 29, 1826: Clive Bayley MSS.

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

the Citadel surrendered at discretion: and the Usurper was taken Prisoner in the attempt to effect his escape. We are now able to restore the legitimate Prince, who was in confinement, to his Rights: and at the same time we exalt our Military Reputation higher than ever by the Conquest of a Fortress supposed to be impregnable: confirm our Political Supremacy which had been slighted: and confound the machinations of our enemies. To me who was the Adviser of this assertion of our supremacy in the cause of justice the result has been most gratifying, and has relieved me from a load of anxiety. Our failure would have been dreadful, and we had a narrow escape from failure. The Commander-in-Chief was about to storm before practicable Breaches had been made; and had he not fortunately been dissuaded, we should certainly have failed: and thus we failed in Lord Lake's time: we never could get up the Breach for it was impracticable. Our Troops were as brave then as now. . . . It was a glorious sight, and I shall never forget it. The springing of the Mine—the steady advance of the Columns up the Breaches—the Huzzas of Victory—the planting of the British Standard on the Enemy's Works &c &c. . . . Then came the miseries even of Victory. The numerous dead of the Enemy—the wounded imploring succour—one side hundreds of the enemy crushed and jammed together in a Chasm into which they had rushed in their confused flight—in the other, a number of our own noble fellows, blown up by one of the Enemy's Mines, some dead, some living & calling to be dug out.'

These scenes 'convert the exultation of triumph into the gloom of sorrow, and fill the mind with melancholy reflections on the weakness and wickedness of Man'. The massacre of the fort's inmates was immense; eight thousand dead lay in a comparatively small area.

Reflection modified Metcalfe's anticipations of what might have followed from failure. Failure, he wrote in 1828, would 'undoubtedly have encouraged disaffection. It would have shaken the confidence of our army. . . . But although there is evidence that the result . . . was looked to with intense anxiety by all the states and all the people of India, accompanied, no doubt,



## THE ELDER STATESMAN

by an universal wish for our failure . . . had a general revolt taken place from such a cause, it would have had no connexion whatever with our system of relations or internal administration in Central India. It would have been the reaction of India against its conquerors. It would have been the bursting forth of national antipathy. It would have been the torrent of hatred sweeping away the restraint previously imposed by Fear. It would have been the rising *en masse* of tribes and nations to throw off a detested foreign yoke. It would have been nothing that any system of arrangement in Central India could have caused, or prevented, or remedied.'

He considered the storm had been a near thing; the engineers, insisting on a pause until genuinely practicable breaches had been made, had saved the Army from its own Commander-in-Chief. They had also shown the utmost gallantry during the storming.<sup>1</sup>

On every side the victory, which released a flood of pent-up resentment and misgiving that may seem almost melodramatic to us who cannot put ourselves in the place of those who knew what the name of Bharatpur meant to the two contrasted races, was recognised as Metcalfe's victory. The Governor-General, signing himself 'Your faithful and obedient servant', congratulated him, January 29, on 'your success'. 'That in undertaking this great achievement I was principally influenced by your advice I shall ever readily acknowledge.' 'It had been a source of no little pride and satisfaction to find that the pencil observations which I have usually made in the margin of the despatches of your subordinate agents have universally, I may say, been in unison with your own sentiments, as expressed in the copies of your replies.' Metcalfe 'would have shared the disgrace of failure, and must, therefore, be admitted to the honors of the triumph'. The contrast between his feelings when he witnessed the 1805 defeats and those he experienced when he reached Bharatpur's inner citadel 'must have been sufficiently forcible', wrote a member of Lord Amherst's

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Lord William Bentinck, November 23, 1831: Bentinck MSS.

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

Council. 'Are you not contented? Can any one be otherwise?' Jasper Nicolls asked him.

He was far from contented. The campaign had been his decision, on ethical and political grounds, but conquest had degenerated immediately into a thieves' scramble, achieving a second notoriety which for the organiser of victory robbed triumph of all pleasure. 'Our plundering here under the name of Prize has been very disgraceful, and has tarnished our well-earned honor. Until I can get rid of the prize-agents, I cannot re-establish the sovereignty of the young Rajah, whom we came professedly to protect, and have been plundering to his last lotah<sup>1</sup> since he fell into our hands.'<sup>2</sup> The Commander-in-Chief led the looting, assessing his own services—which Metcalfe did not value so highly—at six lakhs.

Metcalfe picked up the shattered principality, and set it in the niche it was to occupy henceforward in British India's political structure—now practically complete, except for Sind and the Punjab. He then marched to the frontiers of Alwar, whose insubordination he quelled without bloodshedding. Then the troops went into cantonments and he himself on judicial circuit in his old administration of Delhi. He was therefore absent from the grand joint-celebrations of the Burmese and Bharatpur conquests in Calcutta, April 24—when a nymph scattered olive branches and revellers danced and supped all night long, against a background of inspiring names—'Combermere and Bhartpur in lamps on the right, Campbell and Ava in coloured lamps on the left, George IV in the centre also in lamps.' He missed the touching pageant of 'transparencies representing Lord Combermere leading' the infant Raja back to his looted capital, while Victory waved a laurel wreath.

Otherwise occupied, Metcalfe had his own thoughts. 'The world is fast receding from me—for what is the world without the friends of our heart?'<sup>3</sup> The hot winds swept fiercely over the

<sup>1</sup>Brass pot.

<sup>2</sup>Letter to Lieutenant Hislop, February, 1826.

<sup>3</sup>Clive Bayley MSS.: May 27, 1826.

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

drying plains, and in one month two dearly loved assistants died. 'The three friends with whom I arrived at Hyderabad in 1820—Barnett, Wells, Mackenzie', were now all gone. 'I shall never dream of happiness again. I do not mean to say that I shall not recover my usual spirits. I no doubt shall, and that even too soon for my own satisfaction. . . . But happiness, the happiness of the heart, I never shall be able to dream of again. . . . And turning from earthly things, what certain consolation is there in reflecting on those of heaven?'<sup>1</sup> 'Relative follows Relative, Friend follows Friend. . . . What have we but resignation to the inscrutable decrees of Almighty God?'<sup>2</sup> In twelve months he had lost 'five friends on whose hearts I could rely'.

He was hurt by an ungracious letter which Studholme had written to his aunt. 'I trust however that it was only ignorance, and not want of proper feeling towards you. . . . I am glad that it has been determined to continue his education; for his want of energy is against his undertaking any profession. Further instruction may give a better stamp to his character. Anyhow it is the best thing for him.'<sup>3</sup>

He rejoiced at Georgiana's establishment of a school in her husband's parish, and longed more than ever to return to England. India is 'not the Country of my Choice', but only 'the Region in which my Lot has been cast'. He still coveted a seat in Parliament, but it must, as always, be 'an independant Seat'. 'I hold myself independant of Royal Ministerial or Popular Favor.' With the household at St. Austell's to be his refuge, with a chance of public service, 'with the cheering support of the few friends who thoroughly know me', and with 'devotion and love to our Merciful Father', 'I feel very confident of Happiness'.<sup>4</sup> Only the long-rumoured seat in Council or a Governorship would persuade him to remain in India.

In the autumn Lord Amherst started on the customary tour of the Upper Provinces. Metcalfe was to tour Rajputana and meet

<sup>1</sup>July, 1826.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>May 27, 1826: Clive Bayley MSS.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*: October 26.

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

him at Agra, and conduct him to Delhi. In making the arrangements for the meeting of the King and Governor-General, he insisted on perfect equality. Then he was called away by Jaipur's disorder and discontent against the British, and here he went down with the first fever he had ever experienced. Other physical troubles followed. He was low-spirited, brooding over the death of friends and the reported inadequacy of his fortune for the life he planned in England. His agent Brownrigg said that with £4,500 a year he could live at Fernhill; yet, even with the Civil Fund Annuity of £1,000 his income would be short of that sum.

In April, 1826, Metcalfe had been provisionally appointed by the Directors to succeed Mr. Harington as Member of Council. Harington was expected to retire in February, 1827, but did not go until July. Metcalfe, for the second time in his life, took a rest both of mind and body, having given over his charge at Delhi and not yet taken up his new one in Calcutta. Lord Amherst had introduced the practice of Himalayan summering, and Metcalfe bought at Kasauli a house which he named Fernhill—not for the obvious reason only, but because ferns grew in profusion all about it. Here he took stock of life—of the way he had come—of the soul that was formed and forming within him.

He makes the comments all the world has made since—on the scenery's grandeur, the hill people's Mongolian appearance, 'the characteristic caution and jealousy' of India's Chinese neighbours, who received with civility the occasional enterprising traveller but sent him back 'as wise as he went, with the addition of a little experience of Chinese manners and policy'. He rejoices in Nature's European features. 'What delights us Indians most is to see the earliest acquaintances of our Infancy, on which we have not before set eyes since we quitted England—Daisies Buttercups Nettles Dandelions &c Strawberries Raspberries Roses growing wild, with Larkspur Columbine Violets &c and the Oak too, the leaf different from that of ours, but the acorn the same.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Georgiana, June 9, 1827.

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

'At Dihlee the Wind, day and night, is blazing hot. Here we are clad in Broad Cloth and Flannel, and warm ourselves with Fires. I am now sitting close by a Window with the Sash down to keep out the cold breeze. . . .'

Then he pours out reflections which exceedingly few of his bloodthirsty race (and in India fewer than in any other part of the globe) have ever known:

'I tho' no Botanist have a delight of my own, in wandering about the Hills, enjoying Nature's richness, and lifting up my heart, in grateful adoration, to the Creator Father and Preserver of all. It has long been my Creed, that Man ought not to destroy animals for Food, and that to kill them for sport is savage cruelty, scarcely less criminal in reality than the murder of our fellow men; but here I find myself becoming also tender of the lives of flowers, & it seems to me almost a sin to pluck them, and shorten the period of their brief existence. In solitude, among Nature's works, and away from the selfishness of Man, which engrosses every thing, we form friendships with the Children of inanimate Creation. There is a sentiment in Persian Poetry which has always struck me as beautiful. "The Stone and the Plant, which you imagine silent, have voices that reach to the Ear of Heaven".'

On June 29, 1827, came his summons, banishing dreams of retirement, to take his seat in Council as soon as possible. He went next day. 'My Lot has been cast in India, and I will rise as high as Providence may will.'<sup>1</sup> If that was to be no further than a place in Council, he would retire contentedly. Meanwhile—though he does not say so, even to this intimate correspondent—there is the Governor-General's chair. He exults, that out of twenty Directors, all but one have voted him his advancement. 'After the virulent spirit, which had shortly before raged in the Court, I ought I feel to be rather surprized.' And he spells 'independent' at last, as we do, and for the first time; and the spelling 'independant' never reappears, in despatch or private letter.

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS.: June 29.

## THE ELDER STATESMAN

The Governor-General wrote anxiously, July 13, that he could get no word of his new Councillor, 'not even from the Begum Sumroo, who is frequently my neighbour, and who seems to receive intelligence from all quarters'. His letter reflects helplessness in an unfamiliar scene, with no Metcalfe to explain exactly where each suppliant semi-royalty stood and how he should be treated. 'Joudpore, Bickaneer & something else are arrived & will be duly received at our earliest convenience.'<sup>1</sup>

Metcalfe presently appeared out of Himalayan mists, and began to make his way down stream. At Agra, he waited for Sutherland, who had been ill also. Then they went on together; and by the end of August he had taken his seat in Council, and begun the last lap of his Indian career.

<sup>1</sup>India O.R., H.M.S., 29.

## CHAPTER XV

### MEMBER OF COUNCIL

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'I remember the small society, in which hearts communed with each other and happiness never flagged; but what is past is past, and the like will never come again.'—Metcalf, June 16, 1828.

'I am regarded as a relentless hewer and hacker of expenditure, and am sensible of black and sour looks in consequence.'—Metcalf, October 26, 1828. 'How worthless that is which the breath of rumor can destroy; and yet it is this which men are most ambitious of in this world of silliness!'—Metcalf, on Popularity, March 8, 1829.

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Metcalf lingered on in India another dozen years, always under sentence, or half-sentence, of removal, with his eyes elsewhere.

His salary of £10,000—which was more than doubled when, after seven years in the Supreme Council, he rose to be acting Governor-General—he did not consider his own. 'It is intended to be expended in supporting the position',<sup>1</sup> whose duties at first seemed to be just keeping open house:

'The want of time makes me half mad. . . . To add to my distress, people will have the kindness to breakfast with me. . . . The only resource left is to withdraw from society, and to work at night—but I shall tear my eyes to pieces if I do.'<sup>2</sup>

'All my letter-writing now takes place at night; and I am glad when I can get a night to myself for the purpose. On these occasions I avoid a formal dinner, take a sandwich and a pint of claret in the twilight, when too dark to read in the open air, and take to my desk as soon as candles are lit.'<sup>3</sup>

'The bundle of private letters which used to accumulate for

<sup>1</sup>Written of his Governor-Generalship, but largely true of his Membership of Council also.

<sup>2</sup>February 3, 1828: Clive Bayley MSS.

<sup>3</sup>March 28, 1829: *Ibid.*

## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

the day in the week set apart was quite overwhelming. . . . I now go pellmell at all in the ring,'<sup>1</sup> answering letters as they arrived.

He sketched for his sister, May 17, 1830, an average week's programme.<sup>2</sup> 'At this Season I rise at 5 o'Clock or between 5 & 6.' Unless kept up by company, he retired between 10 and 11. Sunday began when he left at 6.30 a.m. for Divine Service at Bishop's College, the nearest place of worship but on the Hugli's opposite bank. Back by 9, he breakfasted, and then must 'break the commandment' and work incessantly at public business until 9 at night, when he took a light meal and read the Bible until his eyes began to drowse. He selected the Bible, partly because it had the largest print and his eyes were weakening. Monday opened with a ride in his grounds, a visit to the stables, a glance through the *Parliamentary Mirror* or a review, bathing, dressing, the Calcutta daily newspapers; then the rest of Monday was exactly like Sunday. Tuesday began like Monday; but, after breakfast, Council attendance took up the whole time, with the mitigation of dinner with friends at night. The other days resembled one or other of these, with occasionally a few minutes' reading of Persian, Arabic, Greek, or Latin, 'to keep up my imperfect acquaintance with these several languages'. 'The day of freedom is however at hand'; with this hope he sustained himself.

'As matters of duty proper in my station',<sup>3</sup> Metcalfe on the third Monday in every month gave balls. 'My conscience is satisfied; and if people be amused, I shall derive pleasure myself from that cause.' As host he showed 'a strong disposition to be mirthful within the limits of becoming mirth'.<sup>4</sup> 'The brisk sallies of indifferent wit with which he enlivened society' were considered, Kaye assures us, good jokes for the time and audience, which of course they were. These entertainments, Kaye (then a young man new to India) adds, were the finest Calcutta had ever known and were the more valued, since coming at a season of financial strain following on the failure of John Palmer's Bank.

<sup>1</sup>March 8, 1828: *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup>December 20, 1828.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>*Life of Metcalfe*, ii, 186.



## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

With the simplicity, amounting to naivety, that distinguished him, Metcalfe was the chief of several Government servants who consented to act as unpaid assignees for the Palmer creditors. The Directors sent him (April 6, 1831) a peremptory order to resign. 'In what way the interests of the Government could be in the slightest degree affected' he found himself 'quite unable to imagine', but 'bowed to the Court's pleasure with implicit deference'.

The Muses rarely visit a man singly. The Member of Council discovered in himself other gifts besides that of humour. All Anglo-Indian heroes have written poetry, and very remarkable poetry, of a tone calculated to do nothing but good. Metcalfe in 1833 addressed in verse 'a very dear friend' who was thinking of committing adultery. His arguments may be indicated for any others who may be facing the same decision:

*Think even of the earthly ills which wait  
On the dark paths of the adult'rous way!  
Think of a bloody and untimely fate,  
Thyself a lifeless corpse in shameful fray!*

*Or else a murderer, reeking from the death  
Of him whose marriage-couch thou hast defiled!  
Gasping in hangman's noose thy latest breath,  
A dangling carcase, hiss'd at and revil'd! . . .*

*Think of the wretched woman's blasted name,  
Her irretrievable and headlong fall!  
Think of her children's everlasting shame,  
Whose curses on thee will thy heart appal! . . .*

*Think that a mother's spirit hovers near,  
Charg'd to attend thy steps in woe or joy,  
And shield thy progress in this world's career,  
The guardian angel of her darling boy!*

*Do not the deed that her pure soul must scare,  
And drive her sainted spirit far away,*

## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

*Leaving thee destitute of Heaven's care,  
Thenceforth to Satan's wiles a helpless prey! . . .*

*I ask thee not to give up woman's smiles,  
Enjoy'd in innocence and open day;  
They cheer man's heart, and, free from wanton wiles,  
Improve his nature, and his cares allay.*

*But by-way meetings, roamings in the dark,  
Clandestine intercourse that shuns the light,  
These are the things that evil purpose mark,  
And man's and woman's reputation blight.*

He kept watchful accounts of expenditure, and urged the young to do likewise, declaring that 'what begins in carelessness may sometimes end in dishonesty'. Though he lavished money on every cause that touched his heart, most of all for the families of men who had died, 'I am saving' (he wrote when Governor-General) 'in spite of myself'. He saved also when Member of Council, partly because of his large inheritance from his father and elder brother. And, unlike Warren Hastings, whom in his loneliness and realist habits of political thinking he so much resembled, he was a good judge of men; his agent in England served him as well as Scott Waring served Hastings ill.

While in Calcutta Metcalfe passed through much evil report, and did much that was angrily canvassed. His stiff integrity, courage, affability, and generosity, wore opposition down. And though to us it seems slightly ludicrous that a man just on the wrong side of forty should have been so stately a father of the community, this did not seem so in India, where men mature swiftly and disappear before youth is quite gone. Metcalfe, moreover, had always been a veteran, and had arrived in Calcutta trailing clouds of celebrity. He had known Arthur Wellesley and been Lord Wellesley's favourite pupil: Warren Hastings had been the friend of his family, Clive had known his father: Munro, Barry Close, Webbe, dim figures of the vanished heroic age, Elphinstone, Malcolm, famed proconsuls, had been his peers. He

## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

had forced the tide of Sikh prowess to shrink behind walls which he had indicated: had ruled the Imperial City, and given law to a host of kinglets: had defeated an infuriated and ruthless Governor-General: had seen both failure and triumph at Bharatpur, and ridden on forays in pursuit of Holkar.

The last exploit was perhaps the one that was hardest to believe. Observers loved to screen themselves, and watch His Honour taking the air in his huge compound at Alipur—in mighty top-boots, on a rotund somnolent cob, with syces walking either side of him. It was magnificent, but it was hardly riding. The cob was quiet and obedient, the course was restricted and secluded; yet even so, Nature made it sharply plain that she had never meant Sir Charles for equestrian exercise:

‘It is some pain to me to write; for a horse fell with me some weeks ago, and I hurt my wrist. It did not trouble me so much at first as it does now, and as yet it is getting worse. I was thrown some time before that and hurt my back. This comes of *trying* to ride. I still persevere, and ride every morning, but I shall probably give it up if I fall again.’<sup>1</sup>

His work now was mainly the drafting of his *Minutes*, that unequalled body of condensed wisdom and experience, the greater part of which was produced during these years. They play over the whole Indian scene, problems external as well as internal, and often not merely anticipate conclusions to which the Victorians were forced in the latter half of the century, they place the writer abreast of our own times.

Habits of self-reliance and loneliness gnarl the mind, and leave a man full of kinks. Metcalfe came to the Council charged with individuality and the puzzling quality which sheer integrity carries. He had to mix with the easy-going Governor-General, with the Commander-in-Chief fresh from his military and financial achievements at Bharatpur, and that staunchest of Howe Boys, William Butterworth Bayley. They all liked him. But they could not understand why he was so unwilling to take

<sup>1</sup>March 8, 1828.

## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

things as he found them, why his brain so restlessly strove after perfection absolute, which he must have learnt by now was not God's plan for India:

'I am at war with my colleagues on the Opium question, and mean to fight to the last. My latest minute remains unanswered. . . . As yet, the majority are declaredly against me, but . . . they have not a leg to stand on—not one among them all. Whatever the issue may be here, I feel that in argument I cannot be otherwise than triumphant.'<sup>1</sup>

'I am getting more and more into the habit of regarding co-operation as a thing not to be expected, and of putting forth my sentiments in minutes, to take their chance. . . . I write more and read Council papers less, for it is impossible to do both.' He found himself 'a lonely being in Calcutta'.<sup>2</sup>

Lord Amherst left India, March, 1828. He had been mainly a listener to his Council's discussions, which were about matters outside his knowledge. He never weakened in his esteem for Metcalfe, and would have liked relations with him less formal than the latter's sense of propriety permitted. They continued in occasional correspondence. Lord Amherst wrote, July 26, 1831, 'You are frequently the subject of conversation in my family circle, which I may truly call a circle of your friends.' Bayley acted as Governor-General until Lord William Cavendish Bentinck arrived, July 4, 1828.

Bentinck had been Governor of Madras, a quarter of a century earlier, and (though the Directors declined to pass a formal opinion condemning him) had been recalled because of the Vellore Mutiny. He had ever since been a persistent candidate for the Governor-Generalship, whose bestowal would remove the slur on his name. He was known to hold advanced political views,<sup>3</sup> and Metcalfe—though admitting only that he looked to

<sup>1</sup>February 10, 1828.

<sup>2</sup>March 8, 1828.

<sup>3</sup>When Bentinck stood for Parliament in 1836, by his election address he showed himself 'the first man of high rank and station who has publicly professed the ultra-Radical opinions which he avows in this document' (Greville: Philip Morrell, *Leaves from the Greville Diary*, 301).

## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

his arrival 'with some curiosity, but without any sanguine expectations. If I find that he has a heart for the public welfare, I will follow him and support him with all my soul; if not, I will continue to perform my own duty, with or without success, as at present, and stand alone, as I now do'<sup>1</sup>—in his secret heart hoped for something better. He was hurt and 'surprised' when their relations began and continued stiffly. He owned that Bentinck was 'a straightforward, honest, upright, benevolent, sensible man', 'unaffected, open, candid, kind', 'willing to be instructed';<sup>2</sup> 'there would be no objection on my part to greater intimacy, although the advances could not with propriety be on my side.'<sup>3</sup> But he thought (and may have been right) that the new-comer had not yet made up his mind about the man of whom he had heard in England such stories of usurpation and arrogance. Excessively tender on the Hyderabad controversy, Metcalfe suspected that the Governor-General was 'on the wrong side'.

'My suspicion as to his disposition on the subject is caused by his total silence towards me regarding it, which . . . can only be explained, in my opinion, by supposing either that he entertains sentiments opposite to what are known to be mine, or that he affects to consider me a party in the matter, between whom and Sir William Rumbold he is to judge equitably—which alone is a prejudging of the case, and the fear of appearing to be biassed by me will probably affect his conduct.'<sup>4</sup>

Rumbold not only had his party in the Court of Directors, in the Board of Control this party was predominant. Back in India, he was seeking permission to return to Hyderabad; this application, which he treated 'as a matter of course', Metcalfe was 'prepared to fight' against all opposition, including the Governor-General's. 'Lord William has never read the Hyderabad papers, deterred by the size of the volume.'

Neither man, as time and experience had moulded him, was easy to get on with at once. 'Perhaps the man who does the

<sup>1</sup>April 6, 1828.

<sup>2</sup>July 22, 1828.

<sup>3</sup>September 1, 1828.

<sup>4</sup>December 2, 1828.

## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

greatest honour to Europe in Asia', a French observer testified, a year later, 'is the one who governs it. Lord Bentinck, on the throne of the Great Mogul, thinks and acts like a Quaker of Pennsylvania.'<sup>1</sup> But he had vanity, as well as simplicity of personal habits. Metcalfe, too, had his share of self-esteem, and had been in so many fights that he expected battle to the end for every opinion. 'Puzzled to understand why I am so completely alone in my thoughts', he could not help thinking that if the Governor-General 'understood me, we should naturally approximate. As it is, he appears to me to prefer any one's opinions to mine. This forces me, as I cannot consent to be driven from the discharge of my duty by slight, to record dissident opinions, in minutes, more frequently than would be necessary if we could cooperate with more sympathy. I fear that there is a want of suavity, or a want of blandness, or some other defect about me, that is not palatable . . . I should add, that there is nothing personally offensive in Lord William's demeanor. There is nothing whatever to object to, in that respect. But the difference between what is, and what might be, in public cooperation and mutual confidence, is indefensible.'<sup>2</sup>

It looked as if the two men would drift into quiet settled antagonism. But they were too honest and fundamentally decent for this to happen. Calcutta laughed at the unskilled horseman who never wished to kill anything and at the Governor-General who threw away 'prestige' by despising the customary extravagance of pomp:

'You may imagine whether there is any lack of people to exclaim over the dissolution of the empire and the end of the world when they see the temporary master of India riding about in an ordinary coat with no escort, or setting off for the country with his umbrella under his arm . . . he has kept pure and inviolate that flower of humanity which the habits of military life so often cause to wilt, leaving in its place nothing but good-fellowship . . . though tried in that most corrupting of professions,

<sup>1</sup>Victor Jacquemont, *Letters from India*, 12.

<sup>2</sup>December 20, 1828.

## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

diplomacy, he has come out of it with the upright thoughts and simple sincere language of Franklin, esteeming it no proof of cleverness for a man to appear worse than he is . . . when I thought of the vast power wielded by this excellent man, I rejoiced for the cause of humanity.<sup>1</sup>

But Calcutta, which mocked them both, presently found itself united in anger against them. This experience drew the two men together, into a comradeship which ended in their doing the finest humanising and purifying work India has known.

The first storm broke over the rescinding of half-*batta*, extra allowances on a partial field basis drawn by the Army while still in cantonments. The Army was continually in a state of effervescence that easily and swiftly passed into mutiny. No man was more sympathetic than Metcalfe, who reckoned himself a soldier by temperament and right of companionship. 'My observations, for twenty-eight years during which' he had associated with military officers more 'than with any other classes of society' had brought 'a perfect conviction that the allowances of officers on full *batta* are barely sufficient for their proper support', leaving 'no room for equitable reduction', though 'men must of course contrive to exist according to the allowances which they receive'.<sup>2</sup> He got the worst of both worlds over the matter. He recorded his strong objections, for the Directors to fume over: 'they will not be relished by the higher powers'; yet rumour credited Bayley with voting against abolition, which his vote, joined to the Governor-General's casting vote, enabled to be carried! Rumour lied in both statements:

'The order was one which could not have been disobeyed, unless we could tell the Court that we are supreme and they subordinate. . . . In the meanwhile, the report . . . has utterly ruined the *ci-devant* "Friend of the Army" in the estimation of that exasperated body'—which shows, he concludes, how much popularity is worth.<sup>3</sup>

Bentinck's and Metcalfe's agreement in general politics, which

<sup>1</sup>Jacquemont, 12.    <sup>2</sup>*Minute*, March 2, 1829.    <sup>3</sup>Letter, March 8, 1829.

## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

isolated them effectively from the rest of British India, also worked to bring about, if not intimacy (both men had passed the period when new friendships arise readily), at least cordial understanding. Another Charter was shortly due, and it would bear the impress of questions shelved from decade to decade or answered partially and gradually, and now at last insistent. Revolution was stirring in Europe, and in England people were demanding the Reform Bill. The Company would have to fight harder than even in 1813, to keep after 1833 their still extensive monopoly.

In 1829, Lord Ellenborough, President of the Board of Control, addressed an elaborate and searching questionnaire to the Governor-General, urging him and those associated with him to promote in every way 'the welfare and happiness of the great Indian population':

'We must if possible give them a good and permanent government. In doing this we confer a greater benefit upon the people of this Country<sup>1</sup> than in sacrificing the interest of India to the apparent present interests of England. The real interests of both countries are the same', and if their political connection ceased both would lose. Lord William, commending 'these truly sound and statesmanlike views', modestly passed them on to Metcalfe, September 16, 1829, begging him to lend his unrivalled experience to 'a Stranger to the working of this great Indian Machine, who is most anxious to promote its improvement and the general welfare'.

To Lord Ellenborough's questions<sup>2</sup> Metcalfe made reply in one of the most majestic of his *Minutes*, sombrely impressive with his deeply dyed pessimism and disillusion. But his superior had set him some hard thinking, and a *Minute* could not satisfy the disquiet that had been set up. He therefore returned to these questions repeatedly, in letters to the Governor-General during the years when they were separated, and the latter was away from his capital.

<sup>1</sup>Great Britain.

<sup>2</sup>See Appendix A.



## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

As to debt and expenditure, it was a very different Metcalfe who confronted these problems, from the eager expansionist of Wellesley's time, or even Lord Hastings's time. No man knew better than he, that the Company's administration, while bringing security, entailed a heavier burden than native rule did. Even after Lord William's loathed economies, the average income of a British civil servant, taking the payments of all grades and members together, was £2,000 a year. And, though he wrote:<sup>1</sup> 'Our expenditure exceeds our income by more than a crore of rupees (a million sterling). The Government which allows this to go on in time of peace deserves any punishment. The Government of which I am a part shall not allow it. The cause gives me irresistible power, and I will force others to do their duty'—he soon acknowledged that 'A reduction of taxation for any beneficial consequence appears to be hopeless'. 'The revenues of India are not equal to the support of its expenses, and, judging from past experiences, are not likely to become so. . . . There is little hope of a permanent reduction of establishments; there is a continual tendency to increase.'

His despair was due to obstinate conviction that in one main branch of expenditure extension rather than retraction was called for. 'It is the curse of a Government over a conquered country that it cannot trust the people. Our subjects are internal enemies, ready at least for change, if not ripe for insurrection; the best affected are passive votaries of fate.'

Only an overwhelming military predominance could keep the land quiet; and this must rest on British troops, for the sepoy could not be trusted alone. 'It would be difficult to calculate what force precisely is requisite; it is easy to see that, for security, we have not too much. It seems that we ought to maintain all that we can pay, and to pay them we require all the revenue that we can raise.'

He turned, therefore, not too hopefully but at least with resolution, to ways of increasing income and reducing costs. He had

<sup>1</sup>March 8, 1828.

## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

not modified his opinion, when a comparatively subordinate member of the Supreme Government, of the Permanent Settlement, 'the most sweeping act of oppression ever committed in any country, by which the whole landed property of the country had been transferred from the class of people entitled to it, to a set of Baboos, who have made their wealth by bribery and corruption. . . . Similar injustice has made rapid progress in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces, owing to the abominable system of selling proprietary rights for arrears of revenue. Dihlee is the only portion of the Bengal territories where the rights of the real proprietors or hereditary occupants—the village cultivators—have not been invaded by our nefarious regulations, the whole code of which, being founded on ignorance, ought to be destroyed.'

He had written that, June 29, 1820. Nine years later, he is willing to admit that since the Permanent Settlement cultivation had greatly increased. 'But this is no proof that it would not have greatly increased, with good management, under other modes of settlement.' There had been immense increase in districts outside the Permanent Settlement areas, with the advantage of an increase of revenue as well. 'But what was the price of the Permanent Settlement of Bengal?' 'We not only relinquished the right of the Government to any further revenue from land . . . we destroyed all the existing property in land, by creating a class of proprietors to whom we recklessly made over the property of others.'

His critics, then busy in examining the administration of the Upper Provinces, especially of Delhi, where he had made his name as ruler, had designated Lord Cornwallis as 'the great creator of private property in land in India'. This seemed to them the achievement of all achievements through the ages. But, 'If I were tempted, in imitation of the Board, to designate that revered nobleman . . . by any other title than that by which he is immortalised in the annals of his country, I should say, with the fullest respect to his benevolent intentions . . . that he was

## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

the creator of private property in the State revenue, and the great destroyer of private property in India, destroying hundreds or thousands of proprietors for every one that he gratuitously created.' . . .

It is an essential part of India's case against us, that she has in every generation suffered by having the prevailing political and economic notions of Great Britain imposed upon her helplessness. There has not been wickedness in this; and the resultant misery has been merely that which natural forces blindly inflict, against which no prayers can avail. Those to whom the squire was the perfect head of rural society thanked God that they had been given the chance of exalting and establishing the zemindar. The same era that saw the English peasant expropriated from his common lands saw the Bengal peasant made a parasite in his own country. Metcalfe seems to have thought the wrong was done through ignorance. There is documentary evidence against this view. The Permanent Settlement was made in the face of substantial awareness of the facts, in order to clamp down everlasting quietness on these matters of revenue and land possession rights; and it was made by men who could not conceive any better arrangement than that under which England's innumerable Tolpuddles enjoyed such happiness.

Metcalfe, however, could at least, with eyes made sharp by much experience, look closely into the existing land arrangements. He had known forgery at Delhi, and found it had been hard at work in Bengal, with Government lazily disinclined to see it. Part of the revenue, fraudulently withheld or alienated, was recovered.

Also, he approved (October 26, 1828) Malcolm's proposal to levy *nazarana*, a tax on succession. 'I cannot conceive a more legitimate subject for taxation than the possession of a perpetual alienation of public revenue held under the grant of a preceding government.' Lands had been originally not gratuitous gifts; they had carried obligations to furnish troops.

'What follows? We come and conquer the country. The

## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

holder of the tenure has done his duty; he has been our enemy, and fought against us. All alienations of revenue property lapse to the conqueror. We have a right to consider this assignment as having lapsed. Instead of which, we confirm its continuance. This is very generous, no doubt; but it is a gratuitous waste of revenue, and one of the causes why British India is likely to sink under the pressure of expenditure exceeding income.'

The British Government got no return for the assignments; and a Native Government would undoubtedly have exacted the fines. 'We cannot dispense with our lawful revenue. We are even bound to increase it by all just means, in order to meet and keep pace with our excessive and increasing expenditure.'

'I cannot admit that the mere possession of a gratuitous boon from the Government confers on the heirs of the favored possessor a claim to its perpetual continuance. When was it agreed in England that the grant of a pension for one life, or any number of lives, even in reward of the greatest public services, conferred a claim to its continuance in perpetuity?'

One way and another, the new administration, which began with a deficit of a million, presently found money in its treasury; when Lord William Bentinck retired, he left a surplus of a million and a half sterling. As soon as there began to be funds, Metcalfe pressed to be allowed to raise loans at the cheapest rate, to wipe out outstanding debts. 'The case seems a very simple one', he told the Governor-General, March 17, 1831. 'We have plenty of Surplus Cash in the Treasury, for which we are now unnecessarily paying Interest at the rate of Rs.500,000 or Rs. 750,000 per Annum. According to present appearances we may pay off without in consequence having to borrow money.'<sup>1</sup> Even if borrowing became necessary, it could be done more cheaply than the present arrangement. 'I had set my Heart on seeing the speedy commencement of the reduction of Debt.' He had no use for any finance except the simplest, and opposed (March 27) Thoby Prinsep's proposal to sell off 3 per cent. Stock, and raise

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS.

## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

a loan, getting Rs.80 for every Rs.100 acknowledged as received. 'The plainest mode appears to me to be the best, that of getting 100 cash for 100 Debt, at the lowest Rate of Interest at which money is procurable.' 'The monstrous debt at Home', 'the evil of debt'—Metcalf stresses this note constantly. He had been very sorry when the costly 1830 loan had been opened. All the financial departments had been against it. Yet it had been done.

Early in 1831 (February 19), he was able to write to the Governor-General: 'We seem to be turning the corner of our Financial Difficulties—and if we can keep Peace permanently we shall henceforth I hope reduce debt rapidly. I heartily congratulate Your Lordship on the appearance of the First Fruits of Your Lordship's Financial Administration.'<sup>1</sup>

They were gathering sand in a sieve, however, for in June a requisition reached Calcutta, from the Court of Directors, for a million sterling next shipping season. Metcalfe, reporting this, merely observes that he must therefore open a new 4 per cent. loan, while paying off the 5 per cent. lots already advertised for payment on June 13.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, Calcutta European society did its best to boycott 'the clipping Dutchman' and his apostate Chief of Staff. Indignation was kept alive by reports from England. In December, 1831, a Major White brought the legend that the Chairman of the Directors had authorised him to tell his brother officers that the Governor-General had been empowered to make up what they had lost by the half-*batta* orders. It was no use denying this, Metcalfe remarked. The reply was, Of *course* you do not know of it; the instructions have been sent to Lord William in a private letter.<sup>3</sup>

Against Metcalfe reprisals took the form of virulent calumny. Enemies not only assailed his Delhi record. The ground painfully won in Hyderabad was lost; the Resident slandered him openly and by Chandu Lal's 'subserviency' made full use of the Nizam's British-officered force. The allowances paid there to

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

British civil and military officers had risen, from Rs.1,111,098 for 101 officers, under date January 1, 1824, to Rs.1,340,880 for 123 officers, under date December 1, 1828.

His enemies wrung out of him a *Minute* (November, 1829) on corruption alleged against his servants in Delhi long ago. Metcalfe had to admit that his syce had made a lakh of rupees by selling his horses. 'When I was quitting Dihlee . . . I found myself encumbered with a large stud, consisting in great part of a breeding stud, with which I had amused myself for several years without disposing of the produce.' He had asked Khuda Baksh to sell the horses, himself 'having no practice in such dealings, and no wish to enter into them'. Khuda Baksh 'had imposed my horses on several persons, and levied considerable sums of money in my name, without any reference to the price of the horses'. Metcalfe recovered the horses and repaid these exactions, Khuda Baksh being imprisoned until he disgorged. It was an old story, which only malice could have thought worth revival.

His *munshi* had accompanied Metcalfe as interpreter, teacher, confidential servant, all through the years when his fame was making: in Lake's camp, in his Ranjit Singh embassy, at Delhi. Everyone with Indian experience knows the reputation enjoyed by servants in intimate relations with masters both all-powerful and handicapped by imperfect knowledge of vernacular tongues. Metcalfe had 'never doubted' that his *munshi* 'was liable to strong temptation, and likely to yield to it.' His own conduct had therefore been 'regulated by caution, founded on that general distrust'; and when, after quitting Delhi, he heard rumours of his *munshi* having made money out of his nearness to his master, 'I was more sorry than surprised'. He let him go from his employment for nine years, and the story that the *munshi* had made a fortune of four lakhs during his master's Hyderabad service was sheer myth, since he never was there. During his servant's exile Metcalfe endured 'suspicions that I had done him injustice and consequent self-reproach'. When he went to Calcutta, the

## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

*munshi* had the wit to reappear, bearing signs of impoverishment and distress; and Metcalfe, somewhat naïvely concluding that he himself 'had ceased to hold that kind of public employment in which a native Moonshee would have temptation to take presents', took him back, and later on retired him 'on an allowance which I give him solely because I believe that he needs it'. 'I am a great dupe', Metcalfe observed, on the supposition, which he treats rather contemptuously, that *Munshi* Hafiz-ud-din had been more dishonest than he was entitled to be.

A *kitmudgar* also came into these charges. To prevent his own confidential service from being corrupted, Metcalfe had not taken a *munshi* to Hyderabad. However, 'the Ministers and others . . . could not refrain from tampering with a single servant that accompanied the new Resident', and he became convinced that his *kitmudgar* was receiving large bribes. 'I could not make the man disgorge, because nothing was proved, and everything was denied'. He dismissed him, and (the characteristic conclusion of the story) 'whatever he may have acquired' by bribes, 'he has since, I believe, in a great measure, squandered; and he is now living at his home on an allowance from me'.

There is no mystery about any of these cases. No one with Indian experience will doubt that Metcalfe's servants did nothing wrong by current standards and practice: that they were certainly bribed: and that the only reason why complaints were made was the desire to discredit their master in any way possible.

Rumours persisted that Metcalfe was to succeed Malcolm as Governor of Bombay, and that he was to be made Governor of Madras. His attitude towards such honours was mixed. He regarded the prospect discontentedly, because of disdain of any post below the highest, hardly accepting with grace even a Member of Council's portfolio. He had been 'King of Dihlee'. On the other hand, as a strong Service man he resented what was matter of common knowledge, that the two great governorships were about to be taken out of the promotion open to

## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

soldiers and civilians in India, and reserved for noblemen at home. They had been granted to Munro, Elphinstone, Malcolm, with an air of special concession to specially outstanding personalities, whose like was not expected to recur. Once upon a time, even the highest place of all had been one that a successful civil servant might think within his chances, as Metcalfe himself from the first had thought it. But Barlow had been a bad Governor-General, and the first place was now recognised as scarcely within the orbit of an official's hopes, though Metcalfe (perhaps the last man to feel disappointment at not being made Governor-General) still hankered after it. If Madras and Bombay also were withdrawn into the Home Government's own patronage, it would be felt in India as something of an insult as well as a wrong. Metcalfe, conscious that he had earned the right to rank with Munro, Elphinstone and Malcolm, and that the right was universally conceded, knew that if anyone's claims could hold these coveted posts for the Service, his could. He therefore felt snubbed when rumour after rumour of his becoming a Governor proved unfounded.

However, another honour came his way.

The history of British-Indian relations would have been not merely different, it would have been happier, if Calcutta had not been the seat of rule. Bengal is a country geographically 'tacked on' to India, and in many ways apart, and the mischief done by viewing everything from the angle of Calcutta has been immense. Calcutta's supplanting by Delhi, in our own century, came too late to be of use. Lord William, who wished to carry the Government with him wherever he went, proposed to remove it to the Upper Provinces during his tour there. Metcalfe was happy in the prospect of accompanying him—it would mean a change of air and the chance of seeing old friends whom he considered real friends—although he lamented (July 5, 1829): 'I am not more intimate with Lord William than I was on the day of his arrival. I have not a friend in the whole party. Some I rather like and some I rather dislike; but with any I see no chance



## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

of drawing together, and expect to be in a great measure alone during the trip.'

The project was quashed from London, which made a great difference to Metcalfe—who had taken Bayley's place (November 11, 1829) as Deputy-Governor and President of the Council, one Howe Boy following another, Eton stepping into Eton's shoes:

*Not Amurath an Amurath succeeds,  
But Harry Harry.*

Everything happened in the course of natural law.

It was a superb position; and, since for one reason and another Lord William Bentinck spent an exceptional amount of his time away from Calcutta, Metcalfe became the effectual King of British, as once of Mogul, India. Nevertheless he accepted his eminence 'dejectedly', like Matthew Arnold's 'our greatest' taking his seat on the intellectual throne. 'It is most probably the highest dignity I shall ever reach, and is likely to last until the year of my final exit from the Government.'<sup>1</sup> He resented being debarred from accompanying Lord William; the Upper Provinces lived in his memory, lit up with romance. Life had been lived by him there, in an earlier grander epoch.

'I shall not envy Lord Clare, nor any one who may be Sir John Malcolm's successor; for the duties of the next Governor of Bombay will, I conceive, be very unpleasant. The only thing I shall regret, will be being left in Calcutta . . . instead of attending Your Lordship . . . both because I regard a Member of Council as reduced to insignificance when separated from the Governor-General, and because my power of usefulness, if I have any, must be greatest in the scenes to which you are going. I do therefore deeply lament the Orders from Home which condemn me to Calcutta.'<sup>2</sup>

His advancement was followed immediately by Bentinck's first and greatest reform, his abolition of widow-burning in

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS.: November 14, 1830.

<sup>2</sup>July 18, 1830: Bentinck MSS.

## MEMBER OF COUNCIL

Bengal,<sup>1</sup> an action which Metcalfe (who prohibited the rite in Delhi) is often represented as having opposed. The truth is, he 'cordially concurred', though thinking that 'the disaffected, influential and designing of our subjects' might use this interference with a cherished religious practice, to inflame the multitude. 'It may, perhaps, be made use of in times of disturbance, like our killing cows, or any other practice offensive to the Hindoos, as a rallying-cry.' This danger, however, would grow more and more attenuated.

'I expect that the time will come when it will be universally acknowledged by the people of India as the best act performed by the British Government. My only fears, or doubts, are as to its early effects, and those are not so strong as to dissuade me from joining heartily in the suppression of the horrible custom by which so many lives are cruelly sacrificed.'<sup>2</sup>

'Humanity thus gained a decided victory over blind superstition, and a lesson was furnished which, if succeeding Indian administrations had duly profited by it, would have been followed by many similar triumphs.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>December 4, 1829. Bombay and Madras followed, six months later.

<sup>2</sup>*Minute*, November 14, 1829.

<sup>3</sup>Henry Beveridge, *A Comprehensive History of India*, iii, 200.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE KING OF CALCUTTA

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'In his public career I think no man has shown greater rectitude of conduct, or more independence of mind. . . . We served together for nearly seven years. His behaviour to me was of the noblest kind. He never cavilled upon a trifle, and never yielded to me on a point of importance.'—Lord William Bentinck to Lord Melbourne, on Metcalfe, April, 1836.

'Lord William Bentinck, whose heart was devoted to the welfare of India.'  
—Metcalfe, March 10, 1836.

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**I**n mid-January, 1830, Lord William left Calcutta for Benares, returning, March 24. On October 14, he left the capital again, on his grand tour, and did not return until February, 1833.

His unpopularity swept before him like a pestilence. At Cawnpore the military, to signify that the Bentincks were outside the pale, selected the Commander-in-Chief's Lady for special attentions withheld from the Governor-General's. Metcalfe observed:

'That the officers of the Bengal Army, with their feelings on the Subject of Half Batta, however unwarrantable it may be, should avoid paying a compliment to the Governor-General or any Member of the Government concerned in issuing the odious order, and wish the more to pay a Compliment to a Commander-in-Chief who had no share in it, does not surprize me; although the indelicacy of the intentional distinction is indefensible; but as the Compliment took the form of one to the Countess, I do wonder, that they were not sensible of the unmanliness of the conduct into which their ill humour had led them in not paying a similar one to Lady William. They must, I think, be ashamed of it when they reflect upon it.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>February 12, 1831. This and following quotations are from the Bentinck MSS.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

Other stations followed out a concerted scheme of insult. Metcalfe expressed regret, March 13, that the Meerut officers had been 'as unmannerly and silly' as those of Cawnpore; 'but I am very glad that Your Lordship determined not to take notice of it. The action was negative, one of omission of' what 'could not be required', so it was hard to see what could have been done about it. Still, the Commander-in-Chief and his lady ought to have refused compliments that were paid 'more for the purpose of showing ill will towards the Government and its Head, than from any personal attachment' to them.

The reprobation is mild, and we are justified in seeing Metcalfe's partiality for the Army at work. When he learnt that Ewer, his own truculent critic, had acted similarly, less philosophic he was 'not surprized at anything in the way of impertinence and self-sufficiency on the part of Mr. Ewer; but on what grounds he could presume to imagine himself exempt from the duty of obeying Your Lordship's summons to a public meeting, for consultation on the most important part of his official Functions, I cannot comprehend. That he would have been found ignorant I can easily conceive, for notwithstanding readiness and cleverness, and integrity as to pecuniary matters, there is not a more idle or less zealous character in the Company's service'.

Bentinck, as a disciplinary retort, transferred Ewer from his station, and Metcalfe wrote (March 27, 1831), 'I entirely agree with Your Lordship as to the necessity of enforcing obedience in the Civil Service; and cannot cease to wonder at Mr. Ewer's folly in supposing that he was exempt from it.' When Ewer, a difficult man to abash, put in for one of the two chief plums of the diplomatic service, the Residencies of Hyderabad and Lucknow, it was (April 14, 1831) 'a piece of characteristic effrontery, indicative of that total want of proper pride and delicacy of feeling, for which he is remarkable, substituting self-conceitedness and insolence in the room of those qualities'. Metcalfe seems to have not liked Ewer.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

Indian records abound in instances of what in any lesser person would have been treated as flagrant mutiny, exhibited by the heads of the Army; the military authority has never willingly submitted to the civil. Sir E. Barnes, the Commander-in-Chief, was now the focus and encourager of general disaffection. Though with far less expense the troops could be exercised in their own stations, he was determined to establish large camps, in this and succeeding years, in the subordinate Presidencies of Bombay and Madras, which he had no right to visit unless war or other special emergencies called him.<sup>1</sup> For this arrogation of authority Metcalfe, who had constituted himself the Governor-General's special guardian against extravagance, pronounced 'His Excellency guilty of an act of very improper insubordination'.<sup>2</sup> He was drawn into the open quarrel which ensued, and Barnes visited resentment on the Deputy-Governor equally with the Governor-General. 'Personally', wrote Metcalfe, 'I do not care in the slightest degree for any opinion that the Commander-in-Chief may entertain, or any complaint that he may make, of my conduct towards him. I have made up my mind as to his official character. I see that he is not to be conciliated, and that no Good can be expected from him. I cannot separate his private from his official character—the latter must be the offspring of the former. I have no respect for him; and care not what he thinks about me.' 'Nothing' was 'due to him in courtesy, for he has set it aside entirely in his proceedings towards the Government'.<sup>3</sup> His letters 'displayed an offensive assumption of superiority and aggravated his former proceedings'.<sup>4</sup>

Bentinck, who held the rank of general, became his own Commander-in-Chief. Metcalfe commented scornfully on Barnes's 'coolness in advancing the most preposterous assumptions and expectations' and his procrastination in handing over his post. To do this 'as soon as practicable' Barnes interpreted as 'to keep it as long as he likes'. When he reached Calcutta, Met-

<sup>1</sup>August 11, 1832.

<sup>2</sup>December 19, 1832.

<sup>3</sup>July 30, 1832.

<sup>4</sup>August 31, 1832.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

calfe showed him the courtesy of calling first (February 7, 1833), instead of waiting to be called on.

'I was received with a formal Bow, and a Chair pointed out to me. This was followed by a civil speech about my Health, and I talked about Lady Barnes and the Children and Simla and the Fatigue of the Dawk Journey and so forth. After a reasonable time I took my leave, and we parted with distant politeness. That settles the footing of our personal intercourse for ever. . . . His personal Staff and several Visitors were present, and the Manner of his reception could not be mistaken by anyone.'

Metcalf explains all this, so that 'when you see me as stiff as himself, you may not suppose me to be the cause of our amiable demeanour. . . . I wish Your Lordship well rid of such a *sui generis*.' He exerted himself to get the offender the most comfortable passage home, with a parting shrug of his shoulders at 'the manner in which he never refuses a good thing, though he will not acknowledge the civility which offers it'.

He was shedding much of his early partiality for military persons. In the summer of 1830, a Colonel Briggs co-opted himself indefinitely into Metcalfe's household. He complained of his room's dampness, but ignored his host's pointed observation that he ought to have quarters in the fort.<sup>1</sup> 'The facility with which officers of the Army, after a long absence from India, can evade going to their proper duty, is one of the most glaring abuses of the Service.' Briggs had been absent from India for five years, and from military duty fourteen. 'If he had been a modest man, or had a sense of duty, he would have been with his Regiment.' But he was determined to worm himself into civil employment, *i.e.* the well-paid political line.

'What decency is there in his taking leave of absence to visit Calcutta, Benares, Lucknow, Agra and Dihlee for his amusement? Looking to his real design in this matter there is worse; considering how he is forcing himself where he is not wanted. I have a great inclination to tear this letter, considering how I have

<sup>1</sup>August 14, 1830.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

been abusing both him and Mr. Ewer. I have no patience with characters of such presumption. They make me seem even in my own eyes ill-natured, and much more of course in those of others.' Briggs talked much of going up country, in which case, Metcalfe warns Bentinck, he would turn up in the Governor-General's camp, follow him about and ultimately return to Calcutta with him. And so it happened; September 4, 'the Inevitable Colonel Briggs . . . commenced his approaches against Your Lordship's position yesterday, and will, I presume, take it by Storm before the end of next month, with or without your leave'.

On every question, the correspondence of these two remarkable men was close and constant. Metcalfe, after a controversy with the High Court Judges, commends their spirit (though perhaps with less abasement than he should have evinced). 'They have let me off very handsomely, and much more gently than I expected, considering my rashness in attempting to expound the Law. Their Minutes are all written in a most engaging & gentlemanly spirit, but do not help the Government much out of its difficulties, for they rather defend the evils which exist, as if they were not evils, than suggest any remedy for them.'<sup>1</sup>

Another question was that of Fort William College, which the Directors had ordered to be closed. Metcalfe emphatically concurred; Bentinck was for holding his instructions up, pending a chance to argue against them. 'The studies & examinations of that Institution', said its most distinguished son, 'were as ill suited to qualify young men in an useful knowledge of the languages for public service, as if they had been purposely contrived to impede it. . . . Scholarship is not to be given in a few months . . . and the smattering given by the College was all in a wrong direction. . . . The College examination was a very fallacious test.'<sup>2</sup> He asked if the Governor-General had decided to obey the Court's orders;<sup>3</sup> and reported<sup>4</sup> that he and his colleague Blunt had agreed to abolish the College, as from June 1, 1831, with

<sup>1</sup>October 5, 1828.

<sup>3</sup>January 9, 1831.

<sup>2</sup>April 17, 1831.

<sup>4</sup>March 2, 1831.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

great reluctance, the Head of the Government being away. He held up the promulgation of their decision, in case Bentinck still hesitated. 'Obedience to the Supreme Ruler being my Law', he observed later.<sup>1</sup>

He followed with absorbed interest every incident reported from that unforgotten region which he was forbidden to visit. The rôle of elder statesman now his without challenge or rival, he advised as to etiquette and presents, all-important matters. Indian potentates were likely to be always late. 'With respect to time they seem to attach some dignity to being unpunctual. I hardly ever knew them otherwise. And it is generally, I believe, by design.' He supported Ranjit Singh's desire to have his presents reciprocated before there was a meeting. 'Otherwise he seems an inferior.'<sup>2</sup> 'I wish I could be present. . . . I should like to see my old Friend and Antagonist once more.'<sup>3</sup> He admired Ranjit for his unprejudiced use of talented men of all religions.<sup>4</sup> He flared up at newspaper reports that Ranjit had invested the Governor-General with necklace, bracelets and jewel amulets on his hat.<sup>5</sup> Ranjit had 'played a trick' on Bentinck's inexperience; it was just what he would be likely to do, and the misdemeanour would be accompanied by a great show of cordiality. All India would interpret it as an acknowledgment of inferiority. The trick would probably be repeated at Delhi, where indeed it had been put on Lord Amherst; 'and there it is not amiss, because the superiority of the King is acknowledged and the motive of the acknowledgment cannot be mistaken'. Metcalfe trusted the newspaper reports were wrong, and that gifts had been mutual, if made at all.

Bentinck may have found this Himalayan mass of experience a trifle overshadowing, and his acknowledgments of it were tinged with austerity sometimes. He replied that the gifts had been on an exchange of equality.

Metcalfe's interest in the Ranjit Singh meeting went deeper

<sup>1</sup>November 13, 1831.

<sup>2</sup>December 7, 1831.

<sup>3</sup>March 22, 1831.

<sup>4</sup>May 9, 1831.

<sup>5</sup>November 13, 1831.



## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

than the merely personal. He was rigidly discouraging every symptom of a desire to peer beyond the Indus boundary, in which connection he had just written the best known and most quoted of all his *Minutes*. Behind it is a story going back a few years. Lord Amherst, when he left India, took the King of England a shawl of Ranjit Singh's gift. Understanding that the Sikh ruler had a craze for fine horses and assuming that he therefore bred them—and remembering the ancient British fame for producing beasts of vast bulk and strength, mastiffs and the like—the Company sent a return gift of cart-horses, four mares and a stallion. Malcolm as Governor of Bombay had to arrange for their passage and added, as his own Presidency's special present, a carriage, 'as useless an article to Runjeet Singh as the mares'.<sup>1</sup> (Lord Minto had sent him in 1810 a highly ornamental carriage, which had provided a few days' amusement as a plaything and had lain ever since rotting in Ranjit's arsenal). Malcolm, anticipating that the Sind Amirs would feel no joy at seeing the British Mission (their people, when they saw the ships in the Indus, cried out, 'Our country is gone, now that the English have seen it!'), assumed their permission and merely notified them that he had despatched Lieutenant Alexander Burnes to take the horses up their river. Burnes was ordered to study the Indus and its shores closely, and Metcalfe broke out indignantly (October, 1830). 'The scheme of surveying the Indus, under the pretence of sending a present to Rajah Runjeet Singh' was 'a trick . . . unworthy of our Government . . . 'just such a trick as we are often falsely suspected and accused of by the native powers of India, and this confirmation of their suspicions, generally unjust, will do us more injury by furnishing the ground of merited approach, than any advantage to be gained by the measure can compensate.'

It could not fail, 'when detected, as most probably it will be, to excite the jealousy and indignation of the powers on whom we play it'. It might lead to war (now his constant bugbear, so far away from him lay his truculent youth). 'Our officers, in the

<sup>1</sup>H. T. Prinsep, *Origin of the Sikh Power*, etc., 154.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

prosecution of their clandestine pursuit', might meet with insult 'which we may choose to resent'. The rulers of Sind had 'the same right to be jealous of our surveys of their river and their territories that any power of Europe has to protect its fortresses from the inspection of foreign engineers'. The Secret Committee had backed up the project with instructions that 'we must not permit the rulers of Sind to obstruct our measures; in other words, that we are to go to war with them' if necessary. This was a policy which could never 'be asserted to a superior or equal power': 'an exemplification of what I have often observed in our conduct towards the Native States, and what appears to me the greatest blot in the character of our Indian policy, although I am not aware that it has attracted any general notice in England. However much we may profess moderation and non-interference when we have no particular interest of our own concerned, the moment we discover any object of pursuit we become impatient and overbearing, insist on what we require, and cannot brook denial or hesitation. We disregard the rights of others, and think only of our own convenience. Submission or war is the alternative which the other party has to choose.'

He proceeds to demolish the pretended excuse, the threat of a Russian invasion, and concludes:

'Twenty-two years ago the writer of this minute was empowered to negotiate an alliance against a French invasion with a Native State beyond our north-western frontier. A French invasion was our bugbear then, as a Russian one is now. Abdullah Mehrou, at the head of a French army, was reported to have reached Ispahan. But the Spanish insurrection broke out. Sir Arthur Wellesley beat the French at Roleia and Vimiera. The vision of Abdullah Mehrou and his legions vanished, and we thought no more of a French invasion.

'If, therefore, I were asked what is best to be done with a view to a Russian invasion, I should say that it is best to do nothing until time shall show us what we ought to do, because there is nothing that we can do in our present blind state that would be

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

of any certain benefit'. Had Metcalfe been appointed Bentinck's successor, the blood and treasure squandered in the Afghan War would have been saved, and the dishonorable coercion of the Sind Amirs would never have occurred.

Burnes delivered the horses, and returned to Bombay via Turkestan and Persia, with a store of information concerning many lands and a burden of fame too early acquired. Ranjit never looked at the mares a second time; the stallion was put into a breaker's hands and taught the usual artificial paces. Thereafter the ungainly brute stood always 'in the palace yard, or before the tent of the chief', decorated with a golden saddle and necklaces of precious stones, and was 'sometimes honoured by being crossed by Runjeet Singh himself'.<sup>1</sup>

In 1831, when Ranjit agreed to meet the Governor-General, far from justifying Metcalfe's suspicions he even waived points of etiquette that were in his favour, showing 'a liberality not inconsistent with his general character'. Metcalfe's distrust of Bentinck continued, however, and had some foundation. On October 9, 1831, a little less than a fortnight before the two rulers met, he sent an unhappy letter of protest.<sup>2</sup>

'I am exceedingly sorry to learn that Your Lordship is about to embark on negotiations about the Indus. I see that no one is proof against the temptation of extension. It seems to be contrary to our nature to remain quiet and contented with what we have got. In my mind, this move on the Indus is the forerunner of perilous wars and ruinous expenditure. It is wonderful how we invariably confirm and justify the jealousies and suspicions with which we are viewed. The Ameers of Sind have been dreading our encroachments for the last twenty or five-and-twenty years, apparently without warrant or reason. But the day is coming. They will see in your Lordship's proposals the confirmation of their fears. They will not agree to them willingly. The next step according to our usual policy is to compel them. We are too overbearing to be thwarted, and thus we advance crushing the independence of every state

<sup>1</sup>Prinsep, 153.

<sup>2</sup>Bentinck MSS.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

that we come near. We profess moderation, and nevertheless show by our continual restlessness that there is no safety in our neighbourhood. . . . Every step by which we approximate ourselves to the Russians appears to me to be playing their game for them. The only manner perhaps in which they could be formidable to our power in India, is by shortening the distance between us.'

He 'grieved' at Bentinck's projects, which would make 'all the countries we meddle with unaffectedly hostile'.

Bentinck's meeting with Ranjit was at Rupar, on the Satlej, October 26, 1831. Before it, despite the assurances of his French General, Allard, fears of poison or other foul play stirred in the latter's mind. He consulted astrologers, who recommended that he should offer the Governor-General and his Secretary apples. If they made no bones about taking them all would be well. This advice Ranjit thought good. Having sent on his pet cavalry in new yellow silk quilted coats, he breakfasted on spiced cordials, and the coming interview took on rosy colours. His elephants crossed the bridge of boats. He followed; passed through an avenue of British soldiery, with infinity of delay due to his questions: met the Governor-General, who accepted his gift without demur, despite the mischief apples have always caused: and the rest was a riot of caracolings and salutes, flashing cloth and glittering gems and metal, Ranjit and his following the brightest of all, disporting in green and gold, Spring's livery and therefore styled *Basanti*.<sup>1</sup>

For his delight and instruction the British gunners showed Ranjit matters of precision and thoroughness in destruction, that had been undreamed of in his philosophy; and his hosts made him happy with the gift of two guns, an iron suspension bridge model, and a paper promising their perpetual friendship. He liked the guns very much: and revealed intense curiosity as to the Company's plans regarding Sind. Pointing out that the Amirs were exceedingly rich, and possessed no standing army, he

<sup>1</sup>From *Vasanta* (*Basanta*), Spring.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

made it plain that nothing would more gratify him than to help the British to civilise them and divide their property. The British happened to be thinking a great deal about this very question. Only the previous day, Colonel Pottinger had been directed to prepare plans for a mission to force the Amirs to open up their river. However, 'it was not thought advisable to make any communication yet to the ruler of Lahor',<sup>1</sup> who would know all he need know about British intentions, in good time; and so indeed he would have done, if he had not died a little before Napier's conquest of Sind.

Metcalf watched with equal closeness the Governor-General's handling of the King of Delhi and the Rajput Princes, whose affairs were so interlocked. The King complicated matters by his assertion of claims to suzerainty (hard to reject, since the Company had always conceded them, though only formally). He accepted *nazars* and conferred *khilats*, breaking this rule with no one but the Governor-General ('only owing to superior power'). Metcalfe was sorry 'to see that the King is assuming more than he did' with Lords Hastings and Amherst, and regretted that Bentinck had given way, though ever so little. 'We have on the whole behaved generously towards the King from the first; and I never found him unreasonable or assuming.' If he continued to harp on the alleged inadequacy of his reception by Lord Amherst formerly, 'I should think it our best policy in future to let him sink into insignificance, instead of upholding our dignity as we have done'.<sup>2</sup> Metcalfe even wondered if the Delhi Residency should be kept on. On the whole, he thought it should. If it were, it would still be one of the most important political offices (apart from its connection with the King) owing to its control of North-Western relations; and he did not think Rs.60,000, or the highest grade of political salary, Rs.66,000, too much to pay the Resident.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Prinsep, *Origin of the Sikh Power*, 167.

<sup>2</sup>Bentinck MSS.: December 18, 1831.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*: April 26, 1832.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

Metcalfe's favourite Political Officer, Trevelyan,<sup>1</sup> urged that the Company should take over more of the dignity now exercised by the King, from whom people sought titles (he thought) because the Company refused to grant them. Metcalfe disagreed. Let the King squander as many titles as he chose; the more the better. 'The more we manoeuvre or restrict the King in the privilege he is allowed to exercise partially', the more valuable would his titles become. Let them therefore be given to all who could buy them or beg them. 'The present authorities at the Palace will desire to make in their time as much profit as they can. In a few years, if their profligacy of giving were granted free rein, Delhi titles would become as common and unvalued as in Maratha times.'<sup>2</sup>

Yet he confessed that distinctions granted by the King were by long ingrained habit considered 'more respectable and more legitimate than those granted by the British Government'. He therefore pressed for the latter to exercise their prerogative more, and to restrict the King 'within the limits formerly prescribed; for there will be no end to his assumption of it, if he be not restrained'. He was angry when the King sold a title to the Raja of Bikaner; he had been forbidden to grant distinctions outside his own family.<sup>3</sup> Metcalfe was inconsistent on the question. Aware of the ghosts of former reverence still existing in the immense shadows that make up Indian opinion, ghosts still active and for the most part malignant to the British, he finally recommended a moderate and cautious use of the Supreme Government's right as the fount of distinction, until opinion grew used to it. 'The same Princes who would submit to it as an Honor, even now, at the Court of Dihlee, would think it a degradation at the Hands of The Governor-General.' The latter, however, was at least entitled to insist that the interchange of presents between him and

<sup>1</sup>Afterwards Sir C. E. Trevelyan: grandfather of Professor G. M. Trevelyan, O.M.; appointed to Bengal Civil Service, April 30, 1826; became Assistant to Commissioner of Delhi, January, 1827.

<sup>2</sup>*Records of Delhi Residency and Agency.*

<sup>3</sup>Bentinck MSS.: May 9, 1832.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

Princes should be regulated by him. If he did this, in a short time stickiness about dignity would cease.<sup>1</sup>

The King had embarrassed the Governor-General by appealing over his head to the Directors, with threat of appeal to the King of England if necessary. He had sent the celebrated Rammohan Roy as his Ambassador, 'with full and unlimited Powers' to negotiate 'a final settlement of what the King considers to be his fair and equitable claims'<sup>2</sup>—an action which annoyed Metcalfe intensely, the more so because his own actions when Resident at Delhi were said to have admitted these pretensions to direct relations with the Home Government, or at least to have laid the basis on which they were built. He denied this, though willing to own to comparative laxity formerly; his attitude of recent years had stiffened.

'I have renounced my former allegiance to the Throne of Dihlee & do not see any sufficient reasons for such orders as the enclosed. I do not recollect, that I ever issued, or had occasion to issue, such orders, but I cannot at this time say that I never did, for when there was no appearance of presumption on the part of the King, I was disposed to be a dutiful subject. I should now think it impolitic to honour him in such pretensions, & desirable to let him down quietly, as far as possible, into insignificance, without doing anything offensive.'<sup>3</sup>

He condemned the Directors' action in taking up the King's claims<sup>4</sup> to enhanced tribute while his Envoy, whose authority

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS.: letter of July 12, 1832.

<sup>2</sup>'To lay before the British authorities . . . a Representation with which I am charged from His Majesty the King of Delhi, and more especially a Letter from His Majesty to the King of England, which Letter it will be my duty to take an early opportunity of presenting in the Event of the appeal which I am induced in the first instance to make to the Honble. Court of Directors not being attended with success': June 25, 1831: from a printed pamphlet, of which Rammohan Roy says only three copies, 'to the best of my belief', passed out of his possession.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*: April 15, 1832.

<sup>4</sup>'The Authorities at Home ought to decline negotiations with Ram Mohun Rae, and refer the King to the Authorities in India': Metcalfe to Bentinck, December 18, 1831.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

they had refused to acknowledge, was still in London. Rammohan Roy would get the credit for any enhancement, and his snub be forgotten. His title he thought quite illicit, and the Bengal Government expressed to the King of Delhi its surprise at his mission.<sup>1</sup>

Rammohan Roy's work and death in England are outside my story. But he has been sometimes censured for accepting his mission and the title of 'Raja'. The censure is entirely unreasonable. We have no right to expect that his admiration of our efficiency and comparative humanity should have stifled his strong patriotism, or made him rejoice in our unqualified power over his countrymen. He held that the King had a case against the Company. Longing to visit England, he had the courage to be the first Hindu of high caste that did this; and he knew that his chances of mixing with the circles that would give him practical assistance in his aims would depend on his status. He took the opportunity offered him, in spite of Metcalfe's resentment, which we can understand without sharing it.

The King's grim financial necessities dictated (what Rammohan Roy probably urged) his concentration on the inadequacy of his 'tribute'. The King admitted that this had received an increase, but not in proportion to the Crown Lands' increased revenue, which had been 'not only in a great part withheld, but in fact denied', and his 'Allowances . . . limited far below what was Expressly guaranteed'. It had become impossible 'to support that moderate scale of dignity which is due to the Representative of the powerless, but, nevertheless, illustrious House of Timour, and to maintain the numerous Members of the different branches of that House'. Cunninghame might scoff and rage at the whole pseudo-imperial business and the 'heavy clog' of its cost, and point out that the King was the descendant of conquerors and not of the 'legitimate kings of Hindostan'. But the Company's own actions and admissions over many years put them in a difficult position.

<sup>1</sup>May, 1829. See *Press Lists of Old Records in the Punjab Secretariat*, ii, 84 ff.: Consultation no. 21 (February, 1829).



## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

The King claimed a thirty lakhs augmentation. The Directors granted fifteen,<sup>1</sup> which he refused, whereupon the Governor-General (August 2, 1833) declined to enter into discussion, referring the matter back to London. Metcalfe (July 11) refrained comment until he had heard from Rammohan Roy,<sup>2</sup> but thought that any increase should be kept out of the King's hands, and distributed among those who needed it. For his personal expenditure the King had 'abundance', and 'the inhabited part' of his Palace was 'in sufficiently good repair'. Its inhabitants should be encouraged to live elsewhere on moderate pensions. 'If we waste our Resources in such ways . . . we shall not have India long in our Hands'; he was 'very sorry to hear such mischievous nonsense'.<sup>3</sup> The King finally accepted his fifteen lakhs, and on July 14, 1835, presented a list of his stipendaries which ran to 384 pages.

There was some justice in these problems now coming down on Metcalfe's head, to 'vex the heaven of his repose' in Calcutta, for while in Delhi he had watched with too much casualness the gatherings of discontent. But this casualness really belonged to the vanished age of which he had been part; and at the time it had been excusable, in the haste and huggermugger of breaking up and remaking India's political frame. The age of the men who tabulated and weighed phrases and commas was upon him, and he was the first object of their attack.

It was he who had drawn up the arrangements by which the Rajput states, more than a decade earlier, came under British protection. At the time, those helpless, hardly existent principalities had seemed unimportant enough, in the wash of confused problems that followed on the Gurkha War. They had to be plucked out of chaos, and out of the shadow of Amir Khan, Holkar, Sindhia, and assured that henceforth they actually existed and that the Company would look after their existence.

<sup>1</sup>Consultation no. 16, June 21, 1833: *Press Lists of Old Records in the Punjab Secretariat*.

<sup>2</sup>Rammohan Roy died at Bristol, September 27, 1833.

<sup>3</sup>Bentinck MSS. April 15, 1832, and January 2, 1833.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

Now, however, they came forward with questions, based on the text of Metcalfe's hurried treaties.<sup>1</sup> In what manner ought their tribute to be paid? Some of them were having trouble with discontented nobles, and the British Government had promised to support Rajas against rebels. Metcalfe maintained that of course he had meant, against *thakurs* actually in rebellion *at the time of the treaty*; he had intended to set the state on its political feet again, but certainly not to guarantee the Prince and his successors in an unchecked perpetual exercise of despotic power. His own translation of the treaties' Persian text spoke of 'acknowledgment of supremacy and subordinate cooperation'. The states maintained that this was a mistranslation. It should be 'obedience and companionship'. A rising scholar in the Service, Thoby Prinsep, was called in, and enjoyed himself immensely, in protracted learned discussion. Metcalfe, not pretending to exhaustive scholarship in Persian, was at a disadvantage; and Prinsep's tone was rejoicingly hostile. There was wide prejudice against Metcalfe, and younger officials were being swept up into it. His days of happiness ended when he joined the Supreme Government. From now onward to the end he had little left but extreme loneliness and a world that steadily darkened within and without him. This is what makes his courage so moving.

The growing complexity of political affairs made him urge that Rajputana should be made a separate Agency. Delhi without it would still, he reiterated, have enough business to keep it one of the foremost posts, needing always a man of the front rank.<sup>2</sup> He defended the Rajput Princes against attacks from London, and denounced a 'mischievous letter' from the Secret Committee, proposing to wrest territory from them in lieu of Tribute.<sup>3</sup> But he deplored action by his own Governor-General, which tended to give these same Princes high ideas of their importance. Bentinck's visit to them had been the first by the Head

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS. May 9, 1831 and January 28, 1832.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* January 19, 1832.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* May 7, 1831.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

of the Government, and advantage of this should have been taken to lay down a rule as between overlord and inferiors. Instead, 'It seems it was found necessary to coax the Rajpoot Princes to Ajmeer, and that the mode of interchanging presents became a matter of bribe. What was then agreed to became a precedent.'<sup>1</sup> The same treatment would have to be given to Gwalior, because of Sindhia's rank; and it would not be worth while to refuse it to Bhopal and Rewa. Then Metcalfe breaks out, as if by way of relief, into one of his rare (but, when they come, whole-heartedly enthusiastic) notes of commendation, of an officer whose mood and judgment jumped with his own.

'I perfectly agree with Your Lordship in thinking Trevelyan a very uncommon and superior young Man, who, if he keeps his health and has not bad luck, must be one of the most distinguished Men in our Indian Service.'

Those two plague-spots, Oudh and Hyderabad, gave constant anxiety and vexation. Maddocks, the Resident at Lucknow, in 1831 proposed to enter the King of Oudh's service, as his Agent in England, with an income equal to his present salary secured to him for life. 'There must be something in the air of Lucknow', Metcalfe opined, 'most dangerous to the constitution of Honesty. . . . It is only left to suppose that he has been dazzled out of his senses.'<sup>2</sup> He regretted that an old subordinate of his own, Colonel Gardner, was tarred with the brush of this bad business. 'He has always had the reputation of an intriguer; but I have wished to think well of him, on account of services which he once rendered, and which I have thought undervalued.'

Metcalfe, replying to Maddocks, confined himself to anticipating the Governor-General's veto and treated the proposal as merely one that concerned Maddocks personally. The Governor-General sent him a copy of his own reply, of which Metcalfe entirely approved.<sup>3</sup> It was of a severity that shocked the offender back to sanity, after which Metcalfe interceded for him. Mad-

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS. July 12, 1832.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* April 17, 1831.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* May 9, 1831.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

docks had evidently been dazzled and entrapped. It was unaccountable that he had not realised the impropriety of what he proposed. Still, he had not realised it; so the episode must be taken as an aberration and treated as lightly as possible.<sup>1</sup>

This intrigue brought out the problem of Oudh's misery and pillage, procrastinated through so many decades. On April 10, 1830, Metcalfe had sent the Governor-General a *Minute* on the subject. The King, he said, was a wretched being; but that gave no right to depose him. The cruellest action was the kind that the Company were always taking everywhere: that of forcing on a Prince a Minister of their choosing. Such a Minister was set over his master and supported by the Resident, to whom he was deeply obsequious, particularly in whatever concerned the latter's gratification. Let the Resident give good advice. But leave Princes free to choose their own servants. Interference should be not inquisitorial and harassing, but confined to 'matters of a general manifest and notorious character'. 'It is not perfection that we can demand or expect, but decent rule, and abstinence from atrocious outrage.'

'The worst Governments in India', Metcalfe continued, 'are those which, reposing on our protection as a security, exercise the most stupid aggression fearlessly and with impunity.' His letters indicate *passim* a poor opinion of the ordinary run of Politicals. 'Enmity towards some and Partisanship for others' were the faults of most of them. 'Impartiality accompanies the true spirit of non-interference, which is very rare.'<sup>2</sup> Political officers were 'two-edged tools, and sometimes do good and sometimes harm'.<sup>3</sup> The retort that he himself, who was now sticking up for the rights of native states, had been a prime agent in the greatest overturning of those rights that India had ever seen, the 1819 settlement, he met with the remark that 'no two things can be more distinct than a petty interference in the internal affairs of protected states and the policy which established our supremacy

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS. May 23, 1831.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* January 19, 1832.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* April 26, 1832.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

and suppressed the predatory powers'.<sup>1</sup> He was spending much time now in defending his own record, which is perhaps one of the marks by which a statesman can know that he has arrived. Unsatisfactory as most Politicals seemed, however, enough of Metcalfe's own prejudice in their favour remained for him still to think that relations with native states suffered under ordinary civilians. These were 'apt to treat Natives *de haut en bas*, and sitting in their kucherees, accustomed to issue orders to their subjects, forget that a different tune and manner are required for political allies and dependents'.<sup>2</sup> He objected to bringing Bharatpur and Dholpur under Agra, for this reason.

As regards Lucknow, he urged that the Resident, if his advice were ignored, instead of resorting to bullying tactics should withdraw, leaving the King to choose among these courses: throwing himself on British protection on any terms, when it would be best to take over Oudh as a temporary measure, making him adequate personal provision; governing decently; or misgoverning worse than ever, and more violently. This last course was the worst possible. But it was scarcely possible. The King, once his protectors forsook him, could hardly be blind to his need for caution. And if he were it was infinitely preferable that tyranny should be in the absence of our troops and Resident, instead of under their aegis.

Bentinck's reply was necessarily postponed in its fullness, until December 15, 1830, when he was himself in Lucknow, and wrote that he had seen Maddocks, who struck him as 'a highly honorable and sensible man', but irritable and sensitive. Maddocks had refused enormous bribes, and his account of previous transactions, in which others had not been incorruptible, was 'very curious'. Against Mr. Ricketts, for example, no witness would be obtainable, though the fact was admitted; the corrupters pleaded 'the dishonor of a disclosure'. Maddocks said the King had appointed a new Minister; 'the misrule in Oude would not be permitted to continue any longer.' The Governor-General,

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS. April 29, 1832.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* February 29, 1832.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

less optimistic, reinforced this hope with a strong warning that it must not continue. He found himself wondering 'if that extreme case was arrived, which required our active interference'. He was going through Oudh to satisfy himself by first-hand evidence. He had thought of asking Metcalfe to come up and advise him, but would try first the effect of repeating his warning verbally, in still stronger terms. It is proof of the closeness with which they were drawing together, that Bentinck asked Metcalfe to keep this letter to himself, not even showing it to Blunt unless he must.

Metcalfe recommended an officer for the post of Resident at Hyderabad, in terms which show the ineradicable distrust with which he approached every thought of that state. 'Parts of his character, his integrity and ability', were 'well suited' to the work; not so his 'vanity and pomposity'. The Nizam's Minister 'will supply incense' gratifying to his senses,<sup>1</sup> and Hyderabad was the last place where a self-sacrificing independence could be looked for. A band was maintained at the Residency, at the Nizam's cost, 'a very objectionable proceeding, and of the same character with others in former days, by which, through the eager readiness of a subservient Minister, the pomps and vanities of the Resident were supported at the expense of the Nizam. I have thought it right to let you know this.'<sup>2</sup>

In keeping with his convictions, he regretted Bentinck's strong action against Mysore. 'Your Lordship I conclude has more information than has come before us, which has induced you to adopt the decided measure of assuming the Government of Mysore. I do not think that we have sufficient for it, if the measure had depended on us.'<sup>3</sup> In this opinion, John Low, who was to carry Metcalfe's attitude into a generation when it was even more eccentric than it was fast becoming now, concurred, writing to Malcolm: 'Of this I am convinced, that if Government had appointed a Resident who was fit for the work, in-

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS. March 27, 1831.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* February 7, 1831.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* September 24, 1831.

## THE KING OF CALCUTTA

stead of an empty conceited dandy, things would never have come to such a wretched state as to call for the extreme measure of deposing the Rajah.<sup>1</sup>

Questions of status and ceremonial unexpectedly presented themselves at Metcalfe's own doorstep also.<sup>2</sup> Envoys from Burma raised the question of keeping their shoes on, and he had been as stiff as Nikal Seyn could have been.

'I am afraid Your Lordship is rather lax on that point. My Indian Experience has taught me that any Native, who comes with his shoes on, where there is a decent covering, or where respect is due, commits what he knows to be an insult, or an assumption of unmeasured superiority.' His Lordship might not take this view. But (and here Metcalfe deserves our sympathy) 'you will, I hope, recollect that our Resident takes off his Shoes, and stands in the Dirt without them, at Ava, and that if these Wukeels were allowed to appear before The Governor-General with shoes on, it would be no small thing to brag of to their own Court'.

He held a party in the envoys' honour, going to 'a little extra expense to make it suitable and agreeable'. But an hour before it they snubbed him by declining to come. They had not been invited to bring their own spittoons. 'This it seems is a matter of Burman etiquette. A Superior carries his Spitting Pot to the House of an Inferior. The Inferior never does to the House of a Superior.' Burmese ambassadors had not previously insisted on this right, but now had orders from Ava 'to carry themselves more highly'. Their jewelled cuspidors had become a necessary apanage.

Metcalfe on occasion had an astringent way with him, and the envoys found themselves offering to apologise. They had been 'ignorant of the rank of my office'. This explanation he ignored, and admitted no communication with them.

<sup>1</sup>Ursula Low: *Fifty Years with John Company*, 133.

<sup>2</sup>Bentinck MSS. February 25, 1831.

## CHAPTER XVII

### ENGLISH LIBERALS IN INDIA

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'I should rejoice at the freedom of Poland, I have no objection to the independence of Belgium if that be possible, I care not how many Republics be substituted for Monarchies in Foreign Countries, provided that order be maintained, and that the Aristoi rule the Mob; but everywhere there seems to be a tendency towards the Multitudes taking the power into their own hands, the consequences of which are frightful, and must end, after going the round of anarchy, in a repetition of Military Despotism.'—Metcalf to Bentinck, April 17, 1831.

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The reader will not have missed the coming of a warm personal note into Metcalfe's correspondence with his Chief. In expressing his excitement at the uprush of revolutionary feeling in Europe he was aware that he was writing to probably the only man in India who shared his anxiety that the Reform Bill should be passed. He scoffed at the terror of a Mr. Sealy who was afraid to go home while the question was being agitated.<sup>1</sup> The Bill seemed 'excellent and perfect'. It 'accords so much with the Constitution, that if the latter should be endangered by it, we can never have had the constitution that has been our Boast'.<sup>2</sup> 'How silly the Clergy are to excite the bad feeling of the Nation against them by their virulent opposition to reform!'<sup>3</sup>

When the new Ministry, 'a splendid array of talents', was announced, he was 'glad that the Duke of Wellington is out. I never could bear him after his insolent treatment of Huskisson'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS. November 13, 1831.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* July 30, 1830.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* September 4, 1831.

<sup>4</sup>The unfortunate rôle which this politician presently had filled in the inauguration of the railway services called out from Metcalfe exclamations of dismay. 'What a horrible death poor Mr. Huskisson has met with! . . . Shaking hands with the Duke of Wellington—the last and the fatal act of his life!' Bentinck MSS. February 16, 1831.



## ENGLISH LIBERALS IN INDIA

From that time it was evident that he was Autocrat, which one does not like to see so palpably in an English Minister.<sup>1</sup> Brougham was Lord Chancellor because (Metcalf thought) 'it would not do' to leave him out and he would not accept anything less. 'What a splendid assemblage of Princes and Nobles' attended Brougham when he 'first took his seat in his Court! How curious it is to see Lord Wellesley coming in and his Brother's going out—and as Lord Steward only—in the tail of a Ministry headed by Lord Grey!' He thought it a bad sign that the people in England did not share his own excitement.

'They do not seem to take the slightest interest in the change of Ministry. The election of Mr. Hunt<sup>2</sup> is a woeful specimen of the state of popular feeling, and what a Monster of Mischief is that man of wicked ambition! . . . O Cruel! I hope that your Lordship's Letters give you matter of consolation. I have no Correspondents and no information beyond the public papers.'<sup>3</sup>

Events in Europe deeply stirred him. He felt relief when the French did not put their Ministers to death after the Revolution. The aspect of Continental politics was frightful, especially at the distance of India.

After the Reform Bill the question of questions was the abolition of slavery, fought step by step in both Houses. The Lords, whose debates showed that concentration on practical issues, without clogging sentimentalism, that has always distinguished them, were led by the Iron Duke. He stressed the negro's deplorable disposition to rest unless hunger or an overseer were actively whipping him; Quashee, as Thomas Carlyle kept on warning a later generation<sup>4</sup>—'an idle black gentleman, with his rum-bottle in his hand, no breeches on his body'—pre-

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS. April 17, 1831.

<sup>2</sup>'Orator Hunt.'

<sup>3</sup>Bentinck MSS. May 25, 1831.

<sup>4</sup>'Quashee, sunk to the ears in pumpkin, imbibing saccharine juices . . . with beneficent whip, since other methods avail not, should be compelled to work' ('Carlyle, in prophetic delirium, mouthing apocalyptic bombast'—Lord Olivier, *The Myth of Governor Eyre*, 25): *Fraser's Magazine*, 'A Discourse on Niggers', November, 1849.

## ENGLISH LIBERALS IN INDIA

ferred watermelons to the inward glow of knowing that he was building up wealth for others. When Lord St. Vincent remarked (June 4, 1833) that the West Indies were so scandalously fertile 'that consequently some greater stimulus than mere necessity was required to induce' the negro 'to employ his time profitably to the country and his master', Lord Wellington supported him with interesting information about the practice of another civilised nation:<sup>1</sup>

'In all other cases where the emancipation of slaves had been effected, it had been so effected in combination with some amelioration in the state of the country where it took place. In that manner the emancipation of the great body of the slaves in the United States had taken place. They had been emancipated because it was discovered that it was cheaper to employ free labourers. . . . At this moment it was not more certain than it was two centuries ago, that the black man could be brought to labour without that species of compulsion which was practicable only when he was in a state of slavery. It was still quite uncertain whether he could be brought to work for hire, if liberated, which, after all, was the real question; and, therefore, it was necessary to be extremely cautious in their proceedings.'

That caution had not always, the Duke grieved to remind them, been shown by Their Lordships. He agreed with those who thought the mischief began with the precipitate abolition of the slave-trade (1807), which had made later steps along the same road inevitable. Surely that one step—taken as recently as a quarter of a century ago—was enough for their own lifetimes! Besides, other steps *had* been taken. By an Order in Council, promulgated in 1830, slaves had been declared competent to marry: females were not to be whipped: the whip was not to be carried at work: the evidence of slaves was to be admissible in law: and there was to be only week-day labour, the whole of every Sunday being given to Quashee to count his blessings and to meditate on them from full heart. It was terribly difficult to get men to work in the tropics as they should. Once they had

<sup>1</sup>Hansard, third series, XVIII.

## ENGLISH LIBERALS IN INDIA

secured life's necessities, their one idea was to luxuriate in the shade. If Britain gave way to such innate devilry, he shuddered to think of what might happen in Jamaica and elsewhere. 'Before long, matters, he was afraid, would come to such a pass as to reduce us to the necessity of destroying the black population.'

These arguments, and the very real problems that attended the abolition of slavery, were Metcalfe's own task, a few years later. Reports of the Duke's frigidly selfish obstruction to all decent causes turned Metcalfe's old adoration to contempt.<sup>1</sup> Wellington's opposition to Catholic Emancipation he thought 'a great proof of want of wisdom'.<sup>2</sup> The generous spirit of his first patron, Lord Wellesley, a warm friend of freedom, strengthened the latter's place in his affection.

With Bentinck a new epoch began, that of the subordination of Eastern to Western ideas and of strenuously intensive reform of Indian practice. The time for overhauling, rebuilding, re-adjustment, had come; and not before it should have come.

The story belongs to general history, rather than biography. But Metcalfe played in it so important a part that it must be indicated. He supported Malcolm, Bombay's Governor, in his ferocious contest with his High Court, in a *Minute* (April 15, 1829) which reflected his own dispassionate commonsense attitude. In the bad temper raging, both parties thought it a point of honour not to yield. Metcalfe, deprecating such childishness, quietly argued 'for the possession of restrictive powers' by Government. 'I only propose what, as I conceive, exists in every country in the world—a saving power in the Government, for the benefit of the State, over all parts of the governing machine, of which the judicial department is one.'

He ran over the long story of similar struggles, especially that which occurred in Bengal in Warren Hastings's time, and drew attention to sufferers whose existence was being overlooked:

'It is unquestionably due to our native subjects that they

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. July 23, 1829.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* September 7, 1829.

## ENGLISH LIBERALS IN INDIA

should be informed to what Courts and to what laws they are amenable. At present they are amenable to the Courts established in the provinces in which they reside, and subject to a modified code of native laws, both in civil and in criminal matters; but suddenly, by some legal hocus-pocus, incomprehensible to them, they find themselves dragged into the jurisdiction of a Court of English law, armed with tremendous power, from which there is no reprieve; where they are beset by unintelligible forms and bewildering complexities, and ruined by intolerable expense.' 'It is hard on natives in the Company's service that they should be amenable to two independent jurisdictions, and not obviously necessary.'

Great changes were impending; another Charter renewal was drawing near. In 1831, Metcalfe supported Bentinck's establishment of 'Principal Sadr Amins', a superior class of Indian civil judges. The higher services remained the foreigner's strictly closed preserves, but the subordinate personnel was becoming predominantly native. Metcalfe and Blunt persuaded the Governor-General not to give these new superior Indian judges jurisdiction over Europeans and Americans, though 'If European and East Indian British subjects were eligible equally with natives' for these posts Metcalfe could see no objection to such jurisdiction, 'as all would then be on the same footing'. Since the judges were exclusively native, 'the jurisdiction also ought, I conceive, to be exclusively over natives'. He thought too, that the new judges' authority ought not to extend 'to any question in which the revenue or interests of the State are concerned'. Also, 'the only mode of maintaining an efficient check over the proceedings of the native judges is to subject them to an appeal to European judges'.<sup>1</sup> In all this he was less liberally inclined than the Governor-General, who bowed to his experience.

'He was the first official to help the Eurasians to help themselves.'<sup>2</sup> The East Indians (Eurasians), he said, 'although native

<sup>1</sup>*Minute*, April 13, 1831.

<sup>2</sup>George Smith, *The Life of Alexander Duff*, 136.

## ENGLISH LIBERALS IN INDIA

by birth, and partially by descent, are as much or more European by descent; and by education, habits, manners and religion, are European and Christian'. British legislation had been chiefly for Hindus and Muhammadans, the majority, 'and for them it has been liberal and careful'. He was a warm and consistent friend of Native Christians also, whom it could never have been intended to exclude, in matters of law and justice, 'from privileges granted generally to people of other religions'. Government should 'rectify whatever omissions have inadvertently occurred':

'I regret the distinctions which exist in laws, rights, privileges, and immunities. . . . I think it desirable that all the exclusions and disabilities under which any class may labor, whether European, East Indian, or Native, should be removed and abolished as soon as possible.'<sup>1</sup>

The question of education was coming to the fore. As all the world knows, the deciding shot in the battle between Orientalists and Anglicists was fired after the new Charter came into operation, by Macaulay, the new Law Member joined to the Supreme Council by the Charter Act, in his *Minute* of February, 1835. His aggressive tone, which overbore opposition, has since aroused resentment, and more secondhand nonsense is talked about what he is supposed to have done by his own single deed, than about almost any other event in British-Indian history. Macaulay did *not* impose on the Government a new and unexpected course. All he did was to express in his emphatic fashion a policy which had already commended itself to the most influential people. Jacquemont, who on most matters thought his own thoughts, passing through India shortly before voiced a scorn for Oriental achievement which is far more bitter than Macaulay's.<sup>2</sup> Sanskrit led 'to nothing further than a knowledge of itself'. Hindustani was 'a contemptible, formless mixture of Persian and Sanskrit', spoken by 'grasping by ear nasal sounds hardly different from a stifled sneeze, and making guttural sounds borrowed

<sup>1</sup>*Minute*, July 27, 1831.

<sup>2</sup>Victor Jacquemont, *Letters from India*, 1829-1832, 13, 14, 108, 156.

## ENGLISH LIBERALS IN INDIA

at second hand from the Arabs, which require a throat of rusty iron, parched with thirst'. When these difficulties had been mastered, all you had acquired was 'a contemptible patois without any literature, a language of the backyard and the shop'. 'As for Persian, my contempt for that language knows no bounds, and I believe that anyone who knows a little and is not paid six thousand francs a year to admire it thinks the same as I do. . . . Hafiz, Sadi and other dull and boring poets of the same sort are no more than useless lace trimmings.'

With his deeper wider knowledge, Metcalfe would not have agreed. But he concurred that there was nothing for it but to inaugurate a mainly English system of higher education. The vernaculars *ought* to be the language of all Government business, and previous to the Muhammadan conquest doubtless had been. But to substitute them for Persian now would throw many Hindus, as well as Muhammadans, out of work. However, from henceforward Persian must be subordinate to English, which in 1835 became the language of the higher law courts. This, Metcalfe thought, would make for efficiency and would ultimately do away with much unnecessary writing.<sup>1</sup>

What really settled the question was Indian insistence (so far as Indian opinion could make itself heard) joined to financial necessity. Pressing for Western education, Indians were unwilling to be fobbed off with the teaching of *pandits* and *moulvis*, and the Directors said the costs of administration must be drastically reduced. This could not be without a vast extension of the use of Indian personnel.

Two men of genius were often in Calcutta while Metcalfe was there. One of them, Rammohan Roy, he regarded (as we have seen) as a designing person presuming on his fluency in English. In this, Metcalfe was no blinder than officials necessarily are. 'The Age of Shakespeare', 'The Age of Dante', were far from appearing as such to the rulers of those epochs. The finest intellect among the British who were contemporary in India

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS. April 26, 1832.

with Rammohan Roy was Elphinstone's, and his references to the great Brahmin are ludicrously patronising.

As to Jacquemont, though Bentinck saw his exceptional qualities, to Metcalfe he seemed simply a teasing, meddlesome foreigner, probably up to no good though perhaps up to no particular harm. When he asked for a letter to Ranjit Singh, Metcalfe answered that one from Ranjit's French General Allard (which Jacquemont already had) would be his 'very best recommendation'; the Resident at Delhi might add a passport. A British letter to Ranjit 'might embarrass the latter, and it is hardly necessary on our part to exact from him more attention to French Savans, or Savoir-voulans, than he is himself disposed to pay'.<sup>1</sup>

But Metcalfe's letters are those of a very tired man. Sentence after sentence falls with joyless laconic cadence, with an effect as of tiny gestures indicating despair.

*For want of me the world's course will not fail:  
When all its work is done, the lie shall rot;  
The truth is great, and shall prevail,  
When none cares whether it prevail or not.*

He lost by the failure of John Palmer's Bank between £5,700 and £6,000.<sup>2</sup> This made him more and more doubtful whether he could support a place in Parliament. Interest had fallen in England, and his investments would bring him in only about £2,000 a year, which would be augmented by the pension of £1,000 (to which his premiums paid during his service entitled him) and about £600 from his Fernhill and Portland Place properties.

He longed for solitude as complete as England could supply. Lakes and mountains attracted him, and more and more one region beckoned, the home of the blameless Ethiops. 'I hear the Inhabitants of the Southern Side of the Isle of Wight highly

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* November 12, 1830.

<sup>2</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. September 1, 1830.

## ENGLISH LIBERALS IN INDIA

spoken of for their innocent habits.' 'I should detest living among people whose habits kept one in continual warfare with crime.' He wanted to help the poor. 'The bane of life in England is the waste of the whole Income on luxury and shew, and consequent penuriousness towards those whose distresses might be relieved by comparatively a little.'<sup>1</sup>

Poor Studholme's wretched life was clouding over more and more. He had an illness, partly mental, in which Mrs. Smyth received him into her house and nursed him back to health. His father remorsefully declined to pass judgment. 'As to the infirmities, of which you forewarn me, I have too many myself, and shall need more indulgence in that respect, than I can be called on to give.' Thankful for Studholme's recovery, he awaited the future with misgiving.

Studholme wrote affectionately and gratefully about his young cousins, two of whom presently joined their uncle in India, William Smyth as his A.D.C. and the other as an officer in the Artillery.

In November, 1830, insurrection broke out among primitive people within forty miles of Calcutta. It began with a small Government disaster; then the insurgents were brought to book on the 19th, and since they would neither flee nor yield lost fifty or sixty killed, the rest, about 250 in all, being taken prisoner. Armed with sticks, they had made two magistrates run for miles and had defied a regiment of infantry strengthened with two guns, forty mounted Europeans, and a dozen native troopers. 'Hundreds of them' collected (the Government forces) 'did not dare to face the King of Clubs'.

The rebels were Muslim fanatics, which at once made Metcalfe suspect that the trouble was economic, since the zemindars were Hindus. 'If it originated in any oppression, the oppressor ought to suffer punishment, and to prevent his repeating it his estate ought to be confiscated.' It was strange that the movement had

<sup>1</sup>*Ibid.* letters, September and October, 1830.



grown so strong unnoticed, 'but it is one of the natural effects of the Bengal Permanent Settlement that the local officers know nothing of the real state of their districts'.<sup>1</sup>

The fire, stamped out where it began, broke out afresh among the Kols in Orissa and Chota Nagpur. In the latter district a leader was found, named Ganga Narayan. The episode, though insignificant, has a special interest for myself. The insurrection was in the district where I lived for many years; and when I first went there old men still reckoned events from the time when 'Ganga Narayan *utechhilo*' ('rose up'). Ganga Narayan had some claims to royal or semi-royal descent, and in his brief career he showed considerable organising ability. According to a British officer who took part in the operations against him, he held court in the jungles; and, instead of sentencing prisoners to death, when he decided on their death he dismissed them with the order to their guards, 'See them across the pass'—the pass which leads from this world.<sup>2</sup> Good-looking women were sure of his esteem, and when I was in India he was still revered for his gallantry, in more kinds than one. He gave Metcalfe a lot of trouble before he was run down in a dry paddy-field, killed and beheaded.

The 'cancer'<sup>3</sup> of which Metcalfe died made its first slight appearance about this time. An inflamed spot on his cheek, it did not pass away as expected, and treatment with acids and mercury only increased the pain. 'I am worse rather than better', he says, in a postscript to his letter to the Governor-General, January 2, 1833. 'No prescription does me any good. I am to undergo a new experiment to-morrow; but I have no faith, which the Doctor says is necessary to produce a good effect.'<sup>4</sup> Presently he told his sister<sup>5</sup> he had been an invalid for some months, 'but Nature seems at last to be prevailing, and I hope that I am getting well'. His illness had commenced in the cold season and was

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS. November 19 and 20, 1831, and January 29, 1832.

<sup>2</sup>*East Indian United Service Journal*, vol. II.

<sup>3</sup>I understand it was what we call to-day a 'rodent ulcer'.

<sup>4</sup>Bentinck MSS.

<sup>5</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. February 10, 1833.

## ENGLISH LIBERALS IN INDIA

going with it. 'As it proceeds from a constitutional affection & not from chance, I have reason to fear that England will not agree with me so well as this Country.' 'Cold is hostile & Warmth friendly.'

His repeated passings over for one of the two great governorships Metcalfe felt deeply.<sup>1</sup> But the Directors (he conceded) were entitled to their own choice. His term as Member of Council was due to finish, August 24, 1832, but Bentinck wrote to Charles Grant, President of the Board of Control, that his going would be a great loss. 'He quite ranks with Sir Thomas Munro, Sir John Malcolm and Mr. Elphinstone'—the accepted 'Big Three' of Indian history during the previous thirty years. 'Whilst he has always maintained the most perfect independence of character and conduct, he has been to me a most zealous supporter and friendly colleague.'<sup>2</sup> Metcalfe, deeply grateful, thanked him:<sup>3</sup>

'I will not attempt to say how much I feel obliged by the kindness of your Communication to the President of the Board of Control. Although I shall most probably speak of it hereafter with pride, as one of the most gratifying incidents of my life, I am not at present disposed to make it known to anyone, as I have no intention of advancing such pretensions on my own part, but mean to await my destiny without any expectation of being disappointed.'

Bentinck, urging what was so obviously necessary for decades before it was done, the formation of a third great governorship, one for Bengal, pressed Metcalfe's right to it. Metcalfe steeled himself against rebuff. His service had been 'independent of any expectation of reward, & as it brings with it its own reward I can never suffer disappointment'. But on the Directors' growing indisposition to promote Company's servants he said, 'They ought, on principle, to take a Company's servant, whenever they can get one. Their disposition to exclude Company's servants

<sup>1</sup>See Clive Bayley MSS. September 1, 1830.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* September 16, 1831.

<sup>3</sup>Bentinck MSS. October 3, 1831.

## ENGLISH LIBERALS IN INDIA

from Governments will be no great encouragement to the Service.<sup>1</sup> When the Court decided, December 14, 1831, to continue him as Member of Council another two years, he heard the news with only moderate exultation.<sup>2</sup> Exclusion from the rank of Governors was a snub, although he considered the Supreme Council a greater honour.<sup>3</sup> He knew the way the Directors' minds were going. The day of the Company's man was seen to be setting.

Governorship was nevertheless to come his way. Under the Charter Act of 1833, Bengal was relieved—though not to the extent of having its own separate Government, yet by having Agra taken and made into a new Province, of which Metcalfe was unanimously named the first Governor, November 20, 1833 (appointment to take effect, April 22, 1834). An honour prized more highly followed a month later, when he was nominated provisional Governor-General, in case Bentinck died or resigned or left India. Without this nomination, Metcalfe wrote to Tucker, Deputy Chairman of the Court of Directors, he would have 'felt that a removal from the Supreme Council to the Government of Agra . . . would have been something like a descent. As it is, I have been highly honoured and distinguished'.

The contingency envisaged seemed more than likely. Bentinck returned to Calcutta, only to break down and be ordered a sea-voyage followed by stay in the hills. He sailed to Madras, February 3, 1834, and went to Ootacamund in the Nilgiris. He was there, widely separated from his Council, when at midnight of April 30, 1834, under the new Act the Government of India expired. He thereupon improvised what was afterwards seen to be an entirely illegal new Government, summoning to him the

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS. August 29, 1832.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* May 9, 1832. See also Clive Bayley MSS. May 19, 1832.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. his letter to Bentinck, February 28, 1834 (Bentinck MSS.), on his appointment to be Governor of Agra. He says he had always maintained that a Seat in the Council was above a subordinate governorship, but since this was not the general opinion was willing to take Agra 'as an intended elevation'.

## ENGLISH LIBERALS IN INDIA

Governor of Madras: Mr. Macaulay, the just appointed Law Member: and an artillery colonel, sworn in as fourth Member. This irregular Cabinet, one of its members being still on his way to it,<sup>1</sup> issued a Proclamation, June 16, 1834, which announced what it was and ramblingly expressed a resolution that the Honourable Sir Charles Metcalfe should not go to Agra but should carry on in Calcutta as Vice-President of Council.

But Vice-President of what Council? India now had two Supreme Councils; and Metcalfe and Blunt, relicts of the dead Government in Calcutta, wrote a cogent examination of the frame (and status) of the phoenix that had suddenly announced its own existence on the remote Nilgiris. 'What is the new Government for?' they asked. 'To call a machine so destitute of governing powers a government appears to us a misnomer.' An act of indemnity afterwards drew a sponge over these happenings. But the vigour of Metcalfe's criticisms had given the Governor-General small joy.

Metcalfe prepared to take over Agra, since the Governor-General proposed to return to Calcutta in the late summer. He looked forward to his new charge without enthusiasm; and how frayed his former good relations with Bentinck had become was now to be made apparent. The Governor-General, possibly smarting under his subordinate's recent frankness of criticism of his own pseudo-council, sent him a letter of instructions which dictated the personnel of his staff. Metcalfe resented this, in the most furious letter he ever wrote:<sup>2</sup>

'In what I am about to say, I beg you to understand, that I do not accuse you of unkindness. I have had too many proofs of great and generous kindness on your part to imagine an opposite feeling. You have done what you think right, without regard to persons, which everybody must admit to be the only proper way of discharging one's public Duty.

'But at the result of your deliberations I feel unqualified annoyance.

<sup>1</sup>Macaulay reached Madras, June 10, and left for Ootacamund, June 17.

<sup>2</sup>Bentinck MSS. August 30, 1834.

## ENGLISH LIBERALS IN INDIA

'Whatever Pride or Pleasure I had in the prospect of the Agra Government has been completely destroyed.

'You have turned the Governor that was to be of Agra, into a Commissioner of Revenue and Police at Allahabad. . . .

'You have not even allowed me the selection of my Secretary, an officer who, of all others, ought to be chosen by The Governor under whom he is to serve. A Secretary chosen by the Supreme Government will be above the Governor, not under him. This arrangement I consider personally degrading to me. . . .

'Speaking of the arrangement as a whole, if it had come from anyone but yourself, I should have been persuaded, that it had been concocted chiefly by some enemy, who, from Envy, Hatred, or Malice, had studied to turn the Government of Agra into Ridicule & Contempt.'

Bentinck, a very sick man, returned to Calcutta, November 14, 1834, and with his rightful Council proceeded to pass an Act legalising his Nilgiri doings. Metcalfe, the day of his arrival, sullenly took the prescribed oaths as Governor of Agra.

Calcutta sped him with the usual round of farewell dinners and addresses. Five hundred leading Indians praised his 'inflexible regard for equal justice, and utter contempt for abuse, corruption, and chicanery', and lamented that 'Our opportunities of estimating the private qualities that have earned you the love of your countrymen have been necessarily few'. He had been 'the firmest friend to the native interests'; 'without flattering our vanity or indulging our caprice you have ever studied . . . to avoid offence to our habits and prejudices'. In his reply Metcalfe mourned the gulf between them made by religion and customs. 'You can neither share in our convivial enjoyments, nor take an interest in our amusements.'

The Baptist missionaries, similarly isolated, 'precluded by views of duty as ministers from uniting in the festive testimonies of esteem for your acknowledged virtues', thanked him for his unvarying response to their appeals for every kind of help. He answered with an enthusiastic tribute to their work. 'I am happy

## ENGLISH LIBERALS IN INDIA

in the belief that the religious proceedings of the missionaries are conducted with a discretion which must relieve their labors from any alarming or offensive character, and at the same time promote their efficiency.' The European civil and military community revived the saga of the little stormer of Dig.

But it was in acknowledgment of a congratulatory letter from Lord Wellesley that Metcalfe really let himself go. Memories and unforgotten gratitude came tumbling up tumultuously:

'It is now within a few days of thirty-four years since I had first the honor of being presented to you. You were then the Governor-General of India, and I was a boy of fifteen, entering on my career. I shall never forget the kindness with which you treated me from first to last. . . . So much depends on the first turn given to a man's course, that I may fairly attribute all that has since happened to me of good to the countenance and favor with which you distinguished me at that early period. My public principles were learned in your school—the school of honor, zeal, and public spirit. . . .'

On the march to his Governorship, brooding resentfully over the wrong that Bentinck had done him, he wrote back: 'I am very sorry that you have so soon thought it necessary to distrust & check the poor Governor of I know not what.'<sup>1</sup> There was no question that could lead to more, or worse, differences, than this one of patronage. As Member of Council, he had never once opposed Bentinck in it. Differences about patronage, once started, were endless. If the Governor of Agra were not to nominate, except precisely as the Governor-General dictated, he would be perpetually thwarted. 'When I nominate a bad or inefficient Servant, I shall feel that your check is well exercised.' Wells, whose nomination as Accountant had been overruled, was a friend, but he had *not* been chosen for this. It did not in the least matter *who* was Accountant. But if the Governor-General meant to interfere with his Revenue and Judicial appointments, how could he be responsible for good government? It was in-

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS. January 16, 1835.

## ENGLISH LIBERALS IN INDIA

tolerable, 'if I have not the right of nomination, as all Governors have hitherto had'.

So his arguments ran, on and on, returning repeatedly to the same point of humiliation and exacerbation. He reached Allahabad, and in its Fort held a levée, his only one. He wrote gentler letters, February 2 and 17, still fighting for his nominations, but mainly about the question tormenting him and agitating British India. Who was to be the next Governor-General? Then Fate seemed to settle it, precipitately and derisively. Squabbles in London held up the sending of a successor to Lord William, whom illness suddenly compelled to leave; and Metcalfe, hurriedly recalled, March 20, 1835, became Acting Governor-General.

It says much for the two men who met in Calcutta for the last time, that they recovered their flawed friendship. It had never been quite cordial; you do not make new friendships of that quality at their age. But it had been grounded on deep mutual esteem and essential agreement on principles and desires; and in after years each man spoke of the other, both publicly and privately, with an admiration that held no reserves.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

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'The limit that I have ever fixed for my public service in India is the point at which I cannot continue to serve without a sense of descending from a higher position to a lower. The descent from the Governor-Generalship I do not regard in that light, because it was avowedly a temporary and provisional appointment, in which I had no expectation of being confirmed. The position below which I should think it some degradation to descend, is that which I occupied before I became Governor-General—that is, the Governor of a Presidency, with the provisional appointment of Governor-General annexed.'—Metcalf, January 24, 1836.

'That in which Whigs and Tories agree must be right. And the only thing in which they have agreed has been in rejecting me as Governor-General. It was quite natural; and the only thing that surprised me was that I should have been thought of. I am proud of that, and by no means disappointed by the failure.'—Metcalf, June 7, 1835.

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Metcalf's elevation, to the fact though not the full status of Governor-Generalship, brought with it so much of misery, from sense of wrong inflicted yet held in suspense over an intolerable period, that it would have been better for him if he had gone home sooner and never attained it. All India knew that if he were turned down now—when the final battle for the Company's servants was raging in England—no Company's man would succeed to the highest post hereafter. Charles Grant's opinion (October 1, 1834)—already expressed by Canning, December 25, 1820—was on the point of being accepted as the canon in future and was openly aimed at Metcalf. 'However eminent' the 'knowledge, talents and experience' of a suggested candidate might 'confessedly be' His Majesty's Ministers 'held that the case can hardly be conceived in which it would be expedient that the *highest* office of the Government in India should be filled otherwise than from England . . . the one main link at



## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

least between the systems' of the two Governments 'ought, for the advantage of both, to be invariably maintained'. The new Charter Act, with its far-reaching changes, made this more desirable than ever.

The reason given was good. With it went one not so good, but not less influential. The post of Governor-General was an immense and glittering prize, too valuable to be surrendered to men in distant India. When influential or inconvenient inefficiency had to be shelved, or importunate expectation satisfied, the Governor-Generalship was a pearl of great price.

Nevertheless, the decision had not been taken irrevocably, and Metcalfe was permitted to know that the fight was taking place over him. When it went against his claims, he had cause to regard it as a personal slight.

The Court of Directors seemed disposed to make a stand for their servants. The Chairman, St. George Tucker, on August 28, 1834, wrote to Metcalfe that he intended to 'place in nomination' (as Bentinck's successor) 'either Mr. Elphinstone or yourself—whichever of the two may be most acceptable to the Court and the Ministry'. He repeated his intention, a week later, and Metcalfe, receiving his letters as he was taking up his new Governorship, wrote back replies that revealed his excitement. 'My dear friend! my friend, indeed! The result . . . cannot be my nomination to the Governor-Generalship; but I regard it as a high honor that you should have thought of me . . . my feelings are the same as if your wish had been successful.' 'My gratitude to those who have fought such a battle for me, and chiefly to yourself, ought to be unbounded: and will, I trust, be as lasting as life.'<sup>1</sup> To Bentinck he wrote that Palmerston would have been the Ministerial candidate, but the Chairman of Directors had refused to propose him; Lord Auckland, he himself thought, would be the man chosen. But the Chairman 'means, if he can carry the Court cordially & generally, to propose either Elphinstone or *me!*'<sup>2</sup> A fortnight later, he heard from Colonel

<sup>1</sup>March 5, 1835.

<sup>2</sup>Bentinck MSS. February 2, 1835.

## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

Cadell that he had actually been nominated on September 26 and accepted by the Directors. This report he believed to be true, yet could not bring himself to believe it! 'I never had the most distant thought of holding the office of Governor-General, otherwise than as a temporary locum tenens.'<sup>1</sup> It is quite clear, however, that for a time he really thought this supreme success was going to come to him.

The Cabinet meant that it should not. Elphinstone could have had it; there was no Hyderabad episode in his record. But he refused it, and the Ministry were determined not to let the Directors have their way with anyone else. 'John Company (your old friend)', wrote Brougham to Lord Wellesley, September, 1834, when the contest was at its height, 'wants a Governor-General of John's own shop—a *second-chop-statesman* called Metcalfe, and John is busy intriguing for this; but we have given his honour a most positive *no* to this or anything of this sort.'<sup>2</sup>

Yet the Directors managed to keep him at least officially in the running a while longer, flatly refusing Charles Grant, the Cabinet nominee.<sup>3</sup> By a majority of fifteen to two, it was carried, September 28, that in view of Sir Charles Metcalfe's qualifications 'it would be inconvenient at present to make any other arrangement for supplying the office of Governor-General', which decision was sent to the Cabinet, who cast about for a new candidate, preferably as colourless as possible. All that could be secured for Metcalfe was reappointment as the second personage in India, the provisional Governor-General if another interim occurred. He had let it be known that he would not remain without this. The Governors of Madras and Bombay, whose positions had been repeatedly refused to him, must take precedence after him. Given this distinction, he was willing to stay 'for less than the Governor-Generalship',<sup>4</sup> and spend the rest of

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS. February 17.

<sup>2</sup>*The Wellesley Papers*, ii, 248.

<sup>3</sup>Bentinck MSS. February 2.

<sup>4</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. November 8, 1835.

## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

his days in India.<sup>1</sup> 'The Duties of the Highest Offices in India are so important, the situations so splendid, that I should find difficulty in tearing myself away, if I had an honorable opportunity of staying.'<sup>2</sup>

Tucker notified him, March 2, 1835, that his demand had been acceded to. The news reached him first from his protégé Alexander Burnes, who wrote from shipboard, returning to India, April 30. Metcalfe sank his hopes quietly, observing to his sister that his rumoured elevation 'was a Flash in the Pan; and that the only thing in which the Whig & Tory Ministers have agreed is in my exclusion'. The Ministry, whether Whig or Tory, 'could not be expected to sacrifice the finest piece of patronage in their Gift. I never expected the office, and am not in the least disappointed. . . . I have never been a Candidate for this or any other office. Whatever has fallen on me has come unsought.'<sup>3</sup>

He found consolation in religion, which had been growing more and more his solace. 'The Ruler of All will settle all for the best.' God had wonderfully sustained him throughout his life, 'and were He to cast me down to the lowest pit of misery to-morrow, I would bless & praise & thank him'<sup>4</sup>—words dreadfully prophetic of what was awaiting him. He spent much time, too, thinking of the lot of his three boys, which was likely to be not of the happiest.

He expected his Governor-Generalship to last three years. It lasted only one—a year of lavish hospitality and charity. From his large English estates and investments his fortune steadily accumulated, nevertheless; and, at last enjoying comparative leisure, he let himself sink into the leafy luxury of the viceregal residence at Barrackpur, a 'beautiful park' which he left with a stately pun that was half a sigh, when after numerous starts and rumours he knew finally that his successor was to be Lord Auckland. It was to become 'The Garden of Eden'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS. August 19, 1832.

<sup>2</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. November 28, 1835.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* June 8, 1835.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* November 8, 1835.

<sup>5</sup>Eden is the Auckland family name.

## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

As Governor-General he put through two reforms, one of which, while it chiefly keeps his name alive to-day, settled irrevocably whatever chance remained of his becoming *pukka* Governor-General. This was his Liberation of the Press. It angered the Directors and that powerful immovable mass, the retired officials.

It was not the *Indian* Press that he liberated, but the British Press in India, which existed under a 'cat and mouse' régime. In its first days, under James A. Hicky, in Warren Hastings's time, physical violence was the main check on its scurrility and irresponsibility. Calcutta society, 'very tolerant of immorality and indecorum', disliked frank commentary on its doings, and Hicky was frequently assaulted. As the century ended, Lord Wellesley, presiding over 'a great crisis, which permitted the intervention of no scruples and compunctions' (luxuries in any case not much in his line), tightened up control. Journalists had leave to write what he approved; if they wrote otherwise they left India. Lord Minto carried the Government's progressively obscurantist attitude still further: 'this dread of the free diffusion of knowledge became a chronic disease. . . . It was our policy in those days to keep the natives of India in the profoundest possible state of barbarism and darkness',<sup>1</sup> a policy which operated outside the Company's own territory. For example, the Nizam expressed a fleeting curiosity as to European machinery, and his Resident procured him an air-pump, a printing press, and the model of a man-of-war. The Resident mentioned to his own Government what he had done, and was rebuked for having put such explosive stuff as a printing press into a Native Prince's hands. He hastened to defend himself, saying that the Nizam had shown no interest in it and that, if the Supreme Government wished, he could sneak into the state *toshakhana*<sup>2</sup> and secretly sabotage the press for ever.

In 1818, the *Calcutta Journal* was started, and from the first was a safety-valve for any disgruntled civilian or (more com-

<sup>1</sup>Kaye, *Life of Metcalfe*, ii. 245.

<sup>2</sup>Repository of gifts to the state.

## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

monly) soldier. Using as a rule<sup>1</sup> classical *noms-de-plume*, these established a tradition of anonymity to which the British in India (except the handful who in crises of intense public anger have expressed themselves against the majority)<sup>2</sup> have remained faithful. The Press considered officials its proper game, and 'the leading members of the Government . . . nursed in the lap of despotism'<sup>3</sup> resented mockery of their foibles and weaknesses. Lord Hastings with disdainful good temper refused to take action. But his (temporary) successor, John Adam, a Scot and 'one of the best and purest and most benevolent men that ever lived . . . actuated by the most upright and conscientious motives',<sup>4</sup> soon found the opportunity for which his hands had long been itching. James Silk Buckingham, remarkable man and light-hearted humorist, came to India and found official jobbery amusing. Some imp of evil sees to it that when the Indian Government takes vigorous action it usually selects its ground idiotically. Adam, losing his head over offences which most people thought no offences at all but gloriously justified comment, deported Buckingham and made Regulations (March 14 and April 5, 1823) which gagged the Press. The British Press, that is. There was no Indian Press yet that dared speak with any frankness, and the Government had no legal right to deport anyone, whether Indian or Eurasian, who was a native of the country.

The British community was resentful, and was not altogether mollified when Lord Amherst let the Regulations sleep. Bentinck followed, and the liberty which Amherst had allowed received an immense extension. The Press was flooded with abuse of the Governor-General, who received it with contempt and even thankfulness. He cared *that much*, he used to say with his snap

<sup>1</sup>Not always; Herbert Edwardes, a little later, startled opinion by his articles signed 'Brahminy Bull'.

<sup>2</sup>For example, the Dyer Testimonial agitation. The minority are usually missionaries and other unimportant people.

<sup>3</sup>J. C. Marshman, *A History of India* (abridged edition), 347.

<sup>4</sup>Metcalfe, April, 1835.

## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

of the fingers, for what critics said. Also, he regarded the Press as the most valuable section of his Intelligence Department, giving him more information than any other source. Metcalfe entirely agreed with him.

Their wise magnanimity was unshared. Malcolm (in his day a very free speaker) as Governor of Bombay was driven into frenzy by criticism, and wrote letters whose whole assumption was that of course there could be only one opinion as to a censorship. 'Though a great tolerative man, I have limits which Gentlemen quite understand cannot be pressed with impunity. . . . Your Calcutta . . . is a boiling pot of Hotch Potch which differs from everything else & it is full of Swells down to *Printers' Devils*. They flatter themselves too that people in England care about them.'<sup>1</sup> Apparently some people *did* care; he raved about 'the abuse & theoretical nonsense of Buckingham', then busy in Parliament; and was wrathful that the India House debates and pamphlets should be reprinted in Bengal, 'till people think we are carried far beyond Leadenhall Street or Common Law', in repression of speech in India.

Malcolm had the prescience to see that one day there would be an Indian Press more abusive than even disgruntled soldiers. His prediction has come to pass, in Bengal most of all. Nothing happens without its reason, however; and if Bengal has acquired a pre-eminence of reckless virulence, Bengal has had more cause than any other Province to think little of the British name. If this opinion seems seditious to my reader, I suggest that he reads carefully the excerpts I have given from Metcalfe's own letters, and spends also a little time in going over the records of Warren Hastings's time. The Government, with its squabbles and ostentation and intrigues and luxury, disported itself in open sight of a people who for many decades were assumed to be without power of seeing or drawing conclusions.

The main cause of vituperation, of course, was the exercise of patronage. In 1832, Lord Clare, Governor of Bombay, flared out

<sup>1</sup>I.O.R., H.M.S., 734 (2), 652-3: letter dated June 23, 1829.

## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

at Calcutta criticism, and wrote to the Governor-General that he must force an editor 'to make a public and ample apology, retracting every word', or else cancel his licence. Bentinck passed the letter on to Metcalfe, who was in charge of the local Government. Metcalfe wrote back to Lord Clare, May 31, 1832, declining to comply with his demands. 'This Government has, for several years past, treated the Press as if it were free. . . . This Government cannot with any consistency interfere . . . in the manner required by your Lordship.' His Lordship overlooked the fact that all that was needed to evade a censorship was to replace a European editor by a native or Eurasian one. He also seemed to think that only the subordinate Governors 'are slandered in the Calcutta papers; but if you took the trouble to read all the trash that is published, your Lordship would see that the Governor-General is continually libelled'. So was Metcalfe himself. He suggested that if Lord Clare really felt too badly to let the matter drop he should take action at law. But he did not advise this. 'The English law seems to me to afford, at the best, very inadequate redress for calumny, while the proceedings in Court often add further insult to the injury.' In a letter to Lord William, Metcalfe repeated these arguments, almost word for word, adding that 'I, who having no patronage might expect to be protected by my insignificance', have just been 'calumniated for a pretended abuse of patronage with which I had no concern'. If definite orders from Home obliged them, of course they must suppress the Press. Otherwise, he proposed to treat attacks with indifference.<sup>1</sup>

Almost Bentinck's last action was to give assurance (January 27, 1835), in reply to a Petition, that 'the unsatisfactory state' of the Press Regulations would be set right. This happened in April, when Metcalfe reversed Adam's 'truculent law',<sup>2</sup> an action to which the British community rose with delight so volubly expressed that Metcalfe was accused in England of

<sup>1</sup>Bentinck MSS. June 17, 1832.

<sup>2</sup>Marshman, *History of India*, 383.

## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

having used his fleeting power to purchase a little cheap popularity, unjust steward of a trust about to pass from him. This charge his former chief, Lord William Bentinck, scornfully denied on his behalf.<sup>1</sup> Metcalfe himself maintained that he merely gave effect to a decision already taken by his predecessor, and long in actual practice; and that there could be no two opinions as to the damage received by Government on the one or two occasions after Adam's time when the Regulations had been enforced. But it was unfortunate that his own people expressed their joy so vociferously, and that his own response to their congratulations was so enthusiastic. He doubted if 'the essence of good government' was 'to cover the land with darkness'. 'It cannot be that we are permitted by Divine authority to be here merely to collect the revenues of the country, pay the establishments necessary to keep possession, and get into debt to supply the deficiency.' 'If India could only be preserved as a part of the British Empire by keeping its inhabitants in a state of ignorance, our domination would be a curse . . . and ought to cease.' The British were in India 'to pour the enlightened knowledge and civilisation, the arts and sciences of Europe, over the land, and thereby improve the condition of the people'. Such progress would 'remove prejudices, soften asperities', commend British rule on rational grounds, and unite rulers and ruled in sympathy, lessening and ultimately annihilating differences. Nothing would help more powerfully than a free Press, and he thought that John Adam—to whom he paid a tremendous tribute—would probably have been one of the first to applaud what had now been done, if he were alive. Here, I think, Metcalfe's natural generosity led him beyond the bounds of what was likely.

The Liberation of the Press followed hard on another far-reaching decision, by which English became (March 7, 1835) the official language of India. From these two actions Metcalfe proceeded to the abolition of the Inland Transit Duties (February, 1836). This, too, had been long in contemplation, and Ross,

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Lord Melbourne, April, 1836.



## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

Metcalf's *locum tenens* as Governor of Agra, in a way forced his hand while he was waiting for a lead from the Committee of Customs sitting in Calcutta. Ross abolished the Customs line between the Agra and Bengal Presidencies, an action in which Metcalfe heartily concurred, closing down the Bengal Customs Houses. And so vanished a vexatious restriction on commerce, which had been 'aggravated by the multiplied extortions and the demoralising habits'<sup>1</sup> that accompany tariffs.

The Cabinet had selected Lord Heytesbury, whom they forced the Directors to accept. The Governor-General-elect had drawn his outfit allowance, received his formal farewell banquet, and taken his passage, when the Tory Ministry fell. A Whig one succeeded, and cancelled his appointment. Whilst they looked round for a new Governor-General, the Cabinet 'were wonderfully consoled by the idea that the public interests were not likely to suffer by any delay that might occur',<sup>2</sup> thanks to Metcalfe being still in the office. Their glance presently settled on a Whig peer, Lord Auckland. He had been at Eton with Metcalfe, a not unimportant detail in an Empire so largely bound together by 'the old school tie'. 'The circumstance, trifling as it was, tended to increase' Metcalfe's 'kindly feelings towards his successor'. Auckland for his part came out full of humble readiness to behave as Metcalfe's *chela*. He arrived and took over the Government, March 3, 1836.

Metcalf had been badly treated. Even the Directors, even the Ministry, were uneasily conscious of this, and were afraid he might prove difficult. A new Bill for the establishment of the North-Western Provinces, formerly his Province of Agra, reduced its status to a Lieutenant-Governorship. Metcalfe told his sister, March 5, 1836:

'I am pressed to stay as Lieutenant-Governor of what was once my Government, by the Authorities at Home, and by The

<sup>1</sup>John Stewart, President of the Calcutta Chamber of Commerce, March 7, 1836.

<sup>2</sup>Kaye, *Life of Metcalfe*, ii, 274.

## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

Governor-General, in a most flattering manner. The only objection that would compel me to refuse is the feeling that I cannot with credit accept a situation so subordinate, compared with the position which I have occupied during the last eight years & more.<sup>1</sup> This objection was 'in some degree modified' by his appointment for the third time as Provisional Governor-General, which 'keeps me the Second Person in India, as being Heir presumptive to the Government'. No man ever received more honey in the form of kind words.

To his sister he had written magnanimously. But with the froward he could show himself froward, and to the Directors he turned a haughty front. 'I do not like tumbling down hill', he told Tucker, February 7, 1836. Edmonstone, his old chief, wrote begging him to be good and meek. As Lieutenant-Governor he would be left free to exercise despotic sway.

'It is, no doubt, a subordinate appointment; but in your hands it will be subordinate only in name, as we are well assured that Lord Auckland, far from being inclined to exercise the control which Lord William deemed indispensable, will be too happy to be himself guided by your superior knowledge and advice.'

The Cabinet also helped in the work of soothing the great proconsul's pride. He was made G.C.B.; and Lord Auckland wrote, November 13, 1835, that his own first public act would be to invest him, after which 'I look forward with hope and with confidence to the advantage which, in undertaking the Government of India, I shall derive from your assistance'. Bentinck had dictated Governor Metcalfe's choice of personal staff; Auckland, as soon as he reached Calcutta, begged Metcalfe to nominate his own A.D.C. for him.

Apart from the Governor-General, there was only one G.C.B. in all India, the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Henry Fane, who, in congratulating Metcalfe on his advancement, expressly stated that his Sovereign's action had his entire approval. 'Soldiers

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS.

## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

would never complain of the participation of civilians in such honors if they were always as worthily bestowed.' This was indeed praise, recognition that the G.C.B.-to-be was really *pukka* in every respect. At the Investiture, March 14, 1836, Fane led Metcalfe up to the Governor-General, who said: 'I have been commanded, Sir, to conduct this ceremony in the manner most likely to do you honor. I invited no one to assist at it; but I opened my doors, and these ample halls are filled with those who honor and regard you.' Metcalfe had 'proved how possible it is at once to support the power and dignity of the British name, and to be the friend of peace, the friend of human improvement and of human happiness'; and when his own time came to leave the supreme position Lord Auckland hoped he might be followed 'with a share of that general respect and general regard' so plainly manifested. To this, and to the numerous addresses on his approaching departure that presently poured in, Metcalfe replied with a great happiness and restfulness of spirit.

Conciliated still further by having the political relations with Gwalior and Rajputana put under him, Metcalfe ('Life being given for the performance of Duties'<sup>1</sup>) consented to accept his Lieutenant-Governorship, even with a curtailment of its expenses and abolition of the grandeur of living in a Fort (that of Allahabad). The last sacrifice 'would, at first, be some degradation in the eyes' of his own community. Still, he would put up with this, and would take Agra as his capital. He assured his aunt, Mrs. Monson, April 3, 1836, that he had 'felt it was my duty to meet' the desires of the Directors and the Governor-General, who had degraded him 'in designation, trappings, and allowances', but had given him powers greater than had belonged to 'the former Government defunct'. He reviewed his own conduct with some complacency, and was conscious that he had done the state some service and they knew it.

Among those who congratulated him was the Heir Apparent to the King of Delhi, afterwards the luckless Bahadur Shah II:

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. August 19, 1836.

## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

‘Hon’ble and Exalted Sir!

These days are replete with joy and happiness! When I heard that you had been invested with the Lieutenant-Governorship of the Western Provinces, my gladdened heart expanded like a flower!’

A complimentary poem accompanied the letter:

*The glad tidings of your coming, like the north wind, has made  
green the garden of my hope.*

*The bird of my heart endeavours to fly with the desire of seeing your  
resplendent garden, but (alas) he has not wings. . . .*

*On the day of the Creation, Heaven threw to thee the lot of fortune  
which was to open the knot of my entangled affairs.<sup>1</sup>*

Metcalf in his acknowledgment traced the writer’s well-known gifts in his poem, and assured him that he might safely trust the British Government’s promises that he should succeed his father.

It would have been well for the poet if those promises had been broken. Next year, Akbar Shah II died (September 28, 1837) in extreme old age. Bahadur Shah ascended the tawdry throne, and the last and most miserable chapter of the Moguls’ story had begun.

So Metcalfe went to Agra. It cannot be said that in his brief tenure of his new post he did particularly much. But he did it very well, and no one made any complaint that it was not more. The Governor-General had almost grovellingly made it clear that everyone felt he was entitled to a spell of well-earned rest. ‘There can be no reason for your making the journey’, he was told before he left Calcutta, ‘with undue haste’. India’s Eldest Statesman, he entered into semi-canonisation before his actual demise. When Lord Auckland made his famous tour of the Upper Provinces, in the autumn of 1837, by mutual consent Metcalfe preserved his own unique position by skilfully retreating in advance from places which the Governor-General meant

<sup>1</sup>May 24 and June 2, 1836. Translation in *Records of the Delhi Residency and Agency*, 367.

## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

to visit. Brentford's two Kings thus kept their royalties intact, and Metcalfe failed to figure in Miss Eden's vivacious journal.<sup>1</sup>

Co-opted into Olympus, he corresponded on high affairs with the two supreme deities of the Indian pantheon, as himself occupying a peak scarcely lower. The Governor-General emphatically agreed with him that nothing could be more foolish than interference in Sikh or Afghan matters; and the Commander-in-Chief and Metcalfe amused themselves with discussions, purely academic, as to the best way of conquering the Punjab. 'If you want your empire to expand', Metcalfe advised, 'expand it over Oude, or over Gwalior and the remains of the Mahratta Empire. Make yourselves complete sovereigns of all within your bounds. But let alone the Far West!'

In Agra he gave up riding, a deprivation he could bear with patience. He took his exercise on his palace roof, because when he went abroad Indians cluttered up his carriage with petitions. Similarly, Bishop Butler (of the *Analogy*) always rode very fast, to avoid beggars who knew that Providence had made him their proper prey.

As regards petitioners, it was hard on Metcalfe that the old tradition of his concurrence, while at Delhi, in immemorial Indian practice (which allows freedom of access to the sovereign) was so well known. It was hard on his subjects that his time in Agra was one of famine, when Indians had more reason than they have ordinarily (which is a very great deal) for wanting to gain the attention of generous and powerful rulers. Readers of *Up the Country* will remember that Miss Eden noticed that there was a famine<sup>2</sup> while she and her brother made their luxurious tour. She thought it must be very good for trade. Other thinkers have also left us their reflections on it. 'A famine in India', remarks Kaye, voicing what was a *cliché* with his contemporaries, 'is an evil beyond the reach of human statesmanship to remedy, or greatly to alleviate.'<sup>3</sup> To interfere with such Acts of God was

<sup>1</sup>*Up the Country*.

<sup>2</sup>In which 800,000 people died.

<sup>3</sup>*Life of Metcalfe*, ii, 303.

## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

almost a minor impiety; and few high officials have been guilty of even a wish to falter into impiety. Metcalfe, though he was troubled by the misery that ravaged his territory, 'knew how little could be effected by human agency to diminish the horrors of such a visitation'. The Governor-General, who was fresh from England, did not yet know this; and it is a considerable item against the heavy score to Lord Auckland's discredit, that he not only gave freely from his own resources but instituted an enquiry which started the slow beginnings of the Indian Government's famine policy.

Famine brought along plague, its natural concomitant. From Rajputana, where it broke out, Metcalfe endeavoured to prevent it spreading across his domains to Lower Bengal. Political assassination entered modern India, in 1897, precisely because of measures taken to hamper plague; Metcalfe's action was before its time. The Calcutta Hindu Press pointed out that the visitation, as the Indian community recognised, had been sent because of the sins of the Government, in pursuance of Providence's well-known habit of punishing the poor for the crimes of the rich. It was useless and wrong of Sir Charles Metcalfe to try to draw a cordon along his frontiers; what God had sent ought to be allowed free passage. 'The more we read', wrote that queerly named paper, *The Reformer*, 'of the disease now raging in Rajputana, the more we become convinced of the impracticability, nay, of the injurious tendency of some of the measures prescribed by Sir Charles Metcalfe for checking the evil. The dragging out of children and wives from the houses of wealthy and respectable natives, and incarcerating them in a lazaretto'—this was dreadful. 'The extortions which would be practised . . . as a ransom from the fangs of the quarantine officers . . . these harpies commissioned by Government to violate the hitherto unseen zenanas of the respectable people'—one shuddered to think of these things. 'The quarantine laws of the Levant, where the plague is familiar to all', were unsuited to India.

Metcalfe still exercised a lavish, if more guarded and stately,

## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

hospitality; still wrote his *Minutes*, and his letters that were practically *Minutes*. But misgivings remained, as to whether he had not unduly demeaned himself. In 1836, when he was again passed over for a Governorship, they were stabbed into full wakefulness. 'I do not care a straw for the Government of Madras and am probably better where I am. But I do not mean to serve in avowed disgrace,' he told Mrs. Monson. His passing over was an 'act of displeasure . . . inconsistent with the leaving in my hands of the higher commission of Provisional Governor-General'.

If he had been less touchy, he might have credited the Directors with wishing to avoid the stupid expense of another unnecessary removal of a Governor and Staff to a distant part of India. But everyone was saying Metcalfe had been snubbed again, and he meant to find out. He questioned Tucker, his former supporter. Tucker was no longer his supporter, and was in no hurry to reply.

Metcalfe wrote to other Directors, who answered with an evasiveness that strengthened his suspicions. One was frank enough to tell him his freeing the Press was unforgiven, though he had not missed the Governor-Generalship solely because of this. 'Hyderabad is not forgotten in certain quarters, and there are persons who never lost sight of their own interests.' There was a feeling against the Civil Service, 'and a very strong feeling in favor of the use of patronage to promote political objects. . . . The current was strong in your favor two years ago, and carried with it even those who had not a friendly feeling towards you.' The current had now turned, and his enemies had it to themselves.

Metcalfe wrote a direct interrogatory, August 22, 1836, to the Secretary of the East India Company. It was not a wise letter; it said rather too often what was quite true, that he did not mind his exclusion from the Madras Government *per se*; it rather defiantly stressed his awareness that the Directors were angry at his liberation of the Press. But it was a natural letter, in the circumstances.

## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

There was no answer for a long while, and Metcalfe followed his enquiry up with letters to individual Directors that they found embarrassing. When the official answer came (dated April 15, 1837), it was exceedingly brief, and was a direct snub. The Secretary was 'commanded to express the Court's regret that you should have made a communication which appears to them to have been altogether unnecessary; as the continuance in you provisionally of the highest office which it is in the power of the Court to confer, might have satisfied you that their confidence had not been withdrawn'. That was all.

It was enough. Metcalfe replied by immediate resignation, with moderation and dignity going over his reasons for feeling that his employers had withdrawn their confidence. If he had been mistaken, 'a few kind words to that effect would have assured me that I could continue to serve without discredit', instead of this 'laconic' note, which ignored the sentiments he had expressed, while reproving him 'in a tone which leaves me no reason to suppose that the Court entertain the least desire for the continuance of my services'. He concluded that he had been intentionally disgraced when passed over for the Government of Madras: that the Court was still of the same mind towards him: that their note now was meant to evoke his resignation.

In a room adorned with pictorial representation of outstanding events in the Lieutenant-Governor's career—where the wondering new generation could admire him advising Lord Wellesley, sternly checking Holkar, warning Ranjit Singh, forging and launching the thunderbolt of war that struck down arrogant Bharatpur—the band played 'Charlie is my Darling', and the British in Agra filled the air with 'stunning huzzas'.<sup>1</sup> The troops turned out under arms, December 18, 1837, to pay the last honours. Then he joined the Governor-General's camp at Cawnpore, December 31. Next day the Governor-General announced that he had received his resignation and was 'pleased to direct that Sir Charles Metcalfe shall continue to receive all the

<sup>1</sup>*The Agra Ukhbar*, December 16, 1837.



## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

honors due' to a Lieutenant-Governor and that the officers of his personal staff should attend him until his embarkation.

Metcalf had a triumphal passage down country, and in Calcutta public enthusiasm let itself go. At a final ball, after supper an officer of the Madras Army told again, amid wild applause, the evergreen story of Dig. The recollection of the admiration and affection that flowered forth moved even Kaye, sixteen years later, to forget Metcalfe's athletic shortcomings, and to lay aside, for half a dozen simply written pages, his tone of patronage. 'A more straightforward politician never lived.' 'He had set his face steadfastly, from his very boyhood, towards the acquisition of Viceregal power and dignity; and he had attained it, not by any acts of spasmodic energy, but by a life of sustained earnestness, unremitting labor, and undeviating integrity.' 'He never indulged in any inflated talk about the wrongs of the people; but he set himself steadily at work to redress them.'

Metcalf had had everything in his favour from the start. But he had made himself into an instrument of service. To him, more than to any other man who had been in India, was due the high conception of duty that after his day justified the reputation of British administration.

It was now, when there was nothing to gain by standing well with him, that he had his reward. Ranjit Singh, in a letter of farewell, testified that it was Metcalfe who had established the peace that had lasted so long between him and the Company; after the Sikh state fell, a dozen years later, Metcalfe's portrait was discovered among the inner treasures of the great Raja's household, with an inscription on its back, 'indicating the interest and affection' which Ranjit had cherished for the man who had worsted him. The King and Princes of Delhi, the Raja of Bharatpur, chiefs innumerable, sent their hail and farewell to the man who now showed, in the moment of his passing, as more than ever a figure of legend himself, the last of the great men of the heroic age that had lingered so long as he was still in the land:

For his own thoughts, he kept them to himself, saying little

## GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

and that little from the surface. But he carried with him a memory of India when it was still a country of independent and powerful Princes, and of free-speaking and unconventionally acting Englishmen, who did hard things often enough but did them as to men whom they regarded as equals. It was in the people of India that he had found what he could not find among his own people; and it was in India that he was leaving the body of the woman who had been the mother of his boys.

He embarked for his own country, February 15, 1838. He had been away from it for more than the whole of the century on whose opening day he had first seen India. The Directors' ungracious action had been wisely guided, by whatever spirits cared for Metcalfe's fame and destiny. He had been in India too long.

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CHAPTER XIX  
ENGLAND AGAIN

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‘But when returned the youth? The youth no more

Returned exulting to his native shore;

But in his stead there came a worn-out man.’—Crabbe.

‘I am sensible that I should not be able to resist a tempting opportunity, that is any honourable opportunity, to enter on Public Duties.’—Metcalf to Georgiana Smyth, July 1, 1838.

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Metcalf went first to his sister Georgiana, at Clifton near Bristol. After six weeks here, at the end of June he went to his elder sister Emily, Lady Ashbrook, at Richmond. Then he ‘borrowed a Collar, my Baggage not having arrived on Thursday, & went to the Coronation. I started at 8 o’Clock in the Morning, & did not get away from the Abbey until near 7 in the Evening, and was so placed as to see nothing during the tedious hours occupied by the Ceremony.’<sup>1</sup>

He had chats with Lord Wellesley and the Duke of Wellington, ‘Civilities passed’ with the President of the Board of Control and with the Directors. Old Anglo-Indian friends welcomed one more of their number, come belatedly to his everlasting repose:

*Each*

*Greets him, their brother, on the Stygian beach.*

Sherer boisterously reminded him of ‘your declaration in Writer’s buildings’, when they were boys together in Calcutta, that nothing short of the Governor-Generalship was going to satisfy him. And—*mirabile dictu*—so it had happened!

Metcalf’s wrestling with perverse fate till he had forced it to yield the fulfilment of his early vow made an immense impression

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. July 1, 1838.

## ENGLAND AGAIN

on his contemporaries. It was like the exercise of will power by which a man can sometimes keep himself alive, when he should be dead, until he has had an interview or finished a task. He had sworn that he would not let his career go till the Angel had blessed him. And he had succeeded, despite the tug of patronage against him, despite changed times and vanishing tradition; and everyone felt he would be the last Company's man to become Governor-General. This feeling was right, for John Lawrence's elevation after the Mutiny was in the nature of an accident, and turned out so ill that no one wished the accident to recur.

Yes, he had succeeded. But at such a price that one questions if it had been worth it. The angel was seen to have cheated, as the ministers of darkness cheated Macbeth. Metcalfe received the letter of the promise, but hardly the reality. Those less than thirteen months of precarious power, with first one and then another *pukka* Governor-General about to come out—could they be considered an adequate achievement of his vow?

He wrote to Mrs. Smyth that by July 14 or 16 he would be ready to receive her at his own estate, at Fernhill, Berkshire, where he was going on the 13th, 'never I trust to return to London except to see Friends when they cannot come to me'. 'What I see of London by no means diminishes my distaste for it.'<sup>1</sup> He was sure that country rest and retirement were best for him henceforward.

So he 'transplanted to the woods of Berkshire the exuberant hospitality of Allipore and Garden Reach'. 'Familiar with the charges attending the most princely style of living in India' (where food and service are cheap), he whose purveyor had on occasion charged him for three thousand eggs for one Calcutta entertainment now 'stood aghast before the indefinite waste of the "servants' hall"'.<sup>2</sup> He possessed approximately £100,000, which was considered only a 'moderate fortune' for one who had enjoyed his chances and distinctions.

The roots of his fortune, like the roots of so much of British

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. July 1, 1838.    <sup>2</sup>Kaye, *Life of Metcalfe*, ii, 352.

fortune in that period (and still existing to-day) went into Ganges mud, but not into the stratum that lay nearest. It sprang from his father's acquisitions, in the most luxuriantly fertile time of all. 'Under skilful husbandry, they 'had been fructifying for a quarter of a century' and were 'the real "Pagoda-tree" which it was now his privilege to shake. And he did not like to shake it into the plush pockets of fastidious flunkys'.<sup>1</sup> His menials seemed engaged in high continual wassail. He found himself practically keeping a free hotel; in addition to people he had to entertain for one reason or another, there were also 'Volunteers'.<sup>2</sup> He talked incessantly of abandoning Fernhill and 'fleeing to a Hermitage'.<sup>3</sup>

He was disappointed also in his sister Lady Ashbrook, whose family life had broken up in unhappiness long ago. 'I quitted India with the Hope of making Fernhill a comfortable Home & Place of Rest for Emily & of thus promoting her Happiness.' This was now seen to be 'utterly impossible, with any degree of comfort, from incompatibility of disposition, whether the fault be hers or mine'. A famous beauty since her first entry into society, she had her own notions of how life should be spent. 'A degree of distaste for her' came into his mind—it was no doubt 'mutual', but it 'destroys for the time the natural effects of the Love due to a Sister'. He had not 'hitherto ventured to hint to her that we must part', postponing this intimation until she presently went off 'to engage in the Orgies of the London Season'.<sup>4</sup>

Moving about in worlds not realised, he found them not the rosy regions they had looked at a distance. He himself had been made where everything came to him naturally, and he had stiff ideas of what a man should or should not do, keeping dignity and delicacy intact. Probably he never realised how fortunately situated from the first he had been, with a father who was a Director: with fortune at his back and influential relatives all over northern India, in its most strategic points, all amassing

<sup>1</sup>Kaye, *Life of Metcalfe*, ii, 353.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* November 14.

<sup>3</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. December 8, 1838.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* December 31, 1838.

## ENGLAND AGAIN

their own fortunes: with an Etonian Governor-General who built on Metcalfe's father his hopes of keeping his threatened eminence. Metcalfe had only once had to solicit anything and even then unnecessarily. Honours had come his way; and when they had been withheld—or granted to men who had done what he had refused to do, pull strings and thrust forward—he had been indignant. He was the Happy Warrior,

*Who, if he rise to station of command,  
Rises by open means; and there will stand  
On honourable terms, or else retire.*

But he had also been the Happy Warrior with near relations at G.H.Q. The world offers very few staff appointments to the Happy Warrior who has only his own sword to back him.

Metcalfe's sisters, whom he had left in the nursery, were settled each in her own way of life. Anglo-Indian friends were vegetating in country estates or intriguing in the Company's Direction and other high places of commerce, finance and politics. None of them shared his consuming passion to serve while strength and time remained to him. Not one of them had his quixotic notions of how chances of service were obtained. There was no place for him in England, though the Smyths were kindness itself.

He was hankering secretly after an Indian Governorship again. Presently a new Governor of Bombay was to be appointed. Some of the Directors sent him a hint to become a candidate. Not he! The Directors had snubbed him when Lieutenant-Governor of their North-Western Provinces, and the Lieutenant-Governor had returned the snub with some addition. Long before the break came, his uneasy sense of what was due to his unique position in India had been a thorn to them. So both sides stood on their dignity.

Another was appointed Governor, and Metcalfe persuaded himself that he was pleased. 'Had the office been offered to me in a manner that would have made it creditable to me to accept it, I

## ENGLAND AGAIN

might have, and should have, felt it my duty to do so. . . . I am glad that it is as it is, for I have no wish to . . . enter again on the cares of Government.<sup>1</sup>

He was presenting a picture that has been presented often since his day—the distinguished Indian public servant who finds himself lost without his work and daily importance, and drifts about unhappily and aimlessly. Sir John Malcolm's bitter cry has been justified in every generation:

'I have the mortification to think that subjects which with me have had & ever must have much importance from being connected with the toils & efforts of my life are not only indifferent to but unknown to all except two or three thousand of the whole population of England, & certainly not above three or four hundred have the slightest pretensions to understand them.' 'Once every twenty years . . . the prospect of fame, place, or Cash gives us & our concerns an ephemeral importance!!!'<sup>2</sup>

Metcalf's lifelong dream had been to enter Parliament, a statesman at last. Here his *Minutes* might be unfolded to an enthralled senate and not merely to a Council of three or four. But he was shocked when he saw democracy's actual working sinews. Offered a seat for Maidstone, for a payment of £3,000, he recoiled as from the gift of a serpent. Friends began to lift their brows and wonder if 'the Indian Governor' (as he was nicknamed) had come back entirely stalwart in his wits; there had been a lot of sun where he had spent his life, and he might have been careless. It was then suggested that he should contest Leeds as a Liberal. He was not unwilling, until he learnt that he would be expected to do some canvassing. Canvassing, he felt, was undignified. A free and earnest people should first take counsel together to select the most distinguished and high-minded man available. Then they should approach him with unanimous request to consent to be their Member.

So he wrote pamphlets: 'Friendly Advice to Conservatives',

<sup>1</sup>Letter to the Hon. Mrs. Monson, November, 1838.

<sup>2</sup>I.O.R., H.M.S.: June 23, 1829.

telling them they were wrong to support the Corn Laws, Church Rates, Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. They ought not to hanker after a chance to reverse the Reform Act. They should be keen upholders of the Secret Ballot and Short Parliaments. They should turn the Bishops out of the House of Lords; he yielded to no one in 'admiration of their qualities and virtues' and was willing to put his hands deep into his pockets to support the Church of England, 'but justice has a higher claim than even attachment to one's Church, and justice is against the predominance of one religion over others'.

He wrote, too, unprinted<sup>1</sup> pamphlets, 'Friendly Advice to the Working Classes', in a tone of complete benevolence and complete misunderstanding that seems to parody Ruskin by anticipation. 'Friends and Fellow-Countrymen', he begins; and proceeds to reason with them.

'You seek to better your condition—a natural and laudable object. With that view you claim rights which you have not hitherto possessed. This, also, is perfectly natural and unobjectionable, and in time your desire will be realised. But you listen to men, and adopt them as your leaders, who incite you to violence and rebellion against the laws—a course which, whatever might be the immediate result, would inevitably mar your prospects, and destroy all chance of success.'

Violence would lead to easy suppression, 'which would cast ridicule on your proceedings and stifle your pretensions, or to suppression after bloodshed which would bring in reaction; or (worst of all) to success, which would mean first anarchy, then despotism and 'disgraceful slavery' for those who had risen. Even 'the appearance of an intention of violence' (Metcalf points out) must annoy 'those classes in whose privileges you seek participation'. 'That they are tenacious of those privileges is no matter for wonder. It is as natural as that you should desire to participate in them. There is, therefore, a predisposition to question your assumed right; and if you attempt violence you will be sure to

<sup>1</sup>Because he went to Jamaica presently.



find resistance. The same blood runs in their veins as in yours, and the more you display a disposition to violence, the more you will rouse opposition.'

He then, to show 'the utter unfitness of some of those whom you have accepted as your leaders to guide you in a right path', goes on to dissect fairy tales. Some of these leaders, he was told, were representing that Government planned a Bill to put to death all children 'born henceforth of poor persons beyond two or three in a family'. 'No words can be sufficiently severe to characterise' the wickedness of such leaders, men 'totally unworthy of your attention, from their diabolical malignity'. Still proceeding in his conviction that he is addressing creatures well-meaning but (like Mr. Bertram Wooster) 'barely sentient', he continues:

'You aim, I presume, at a modification of the Poor Laws, and there is no reason to despair of the accomplishment of that purpose. The perfection of Poor Laws would be to give the most effectual relief without unnecessary hardship to the destitute, and to afford at the same time the greatest encouragement to industry and exertion, and no encouragement to idleness. To make any human institution perfect is difficult and scarcely possible. Whatever there may be of unnecessary hardship in the Poor Laws will, you may be sure, be amended.'

Finally, he deprecated violence even in speech, for it would pain their opponents. 'You desire, no doubt, the abolition of the Corn Laws.' It would come. 'You call for the Ballot. . . . You long for Universal Suffrage . . . a right which must be acknowledged, whenever it can be exercised with benefit to the national interests.' Given time, plenty of time, all these things would come. 'I reserve what I have further to say on these and other subjects for another opportunity.' Meanwhile, 'let me exhort you to proceed with temper and moderation. I do not ask you to desist from any of your projects; but pursue them without violence. Let your motto be, "Patience and perseverance; order and obedience to the laws".'

## ENGLAND AGAIN

The retired Governor and Master of Fernhill exhorting thus the desperate artisans of Manchester and the dispossessed peasants of southern England is sufficiently grotesque. But it is unfair to blame a man whose whole life had been spent where Indian poverty was taken for granted as the inescapable will of God. Metcalfe had grown inured to sight of that pitiful poverty: how could he be asked to understand the poverty which he had not seen? The really admirable and surprising thing is that he should have been so greatly in advance of his own class, the men whom he met at Service reunions or occasional ceremonial dinners. The aims whose legitimacy he frankly admitted were regarded by his own circle as the most villainous jacobinism. He had to apologise to his uncle-by-marriage, Lord Monson, for speaking reprobatingly of the Corn Laws. 'I must have forgotten that I was addressing myself to a land-holder, whose income is derived from rent. You bear the expectation of loss most nobly.'<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, Metcalfe did not merely give advice. At Fernhill, 'I give Work to all who have it not elsewhere, Men, Women & Children. I send to our School of Industry at my charge the Children of all who either cannot or will not pay the trifle demanded for their Education.' He paid the expenses of an evening school for adults, had built and furnished a room, and engaged a teacher. He supplied the Rector with money for all the poor of the parish.<sup>2</sup>

That his political integrity was unimpaired he showed when he denounced in its flush of apparent triumph the Afghan War. 'We have needlessly and heedlessly plunged into difficulties and embarrassments, not without much aggression and injustice on our part, from which we can never extricate ourselves without a disgraceful retreat, which may be more fatal in its consequences than an obstinate perseverance in a wrong course.' 'The only certain results', even of success, would be permanent political and financial troubles.<sup>3</sup> He later (July 24, 1842) ap-

<sup>1</sup>Written in December, 1842.

<sup>2</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. January 31, 1839.

<sup>3</sup>Letter to Lord Clare, Governor of Bombay.

## ENGLAND AGAIN

plauded his old friend Tucker, for action that had been dreadfully prescient. 'You were one of the few who condemned our mad policy . . . when the world admired and applauded.' In 1839, Lord William Bentinck died, and he mourned 'one of the kindest and best of friends', one of the country's 'wisest statesmen and purest patriots', 'the most perfect man I have ever seen'.

His own sons were now all in India. What happened to the second will perhaps never be known; he died early.<sup>1</sup> Henry Studholme, the eldest, in business in Calcutta, found his position insupportable and, wretchedly equipped by character and temperament, later shot himself. The youngest, James, after education at Addiscombe, reached India before Metcalfe left it, commissioned into the Bengal Regiment in 1836. This much his father's fame and influence achieved for him.

Towards the end of 1837, his ulcer had caused anxiety. Some improvement followed, and his general health was excellent. In England the disorder increased its area, but was painless. He consulted Sir Benjamin Brodie, the greatest physician of the day, who prescribed without effect. A country doctor was little more successful, so Metcalfe let things slide, preoccupied with the cost of running Fernhill, which in the early summer of 1839 he decided to leave. Then, on June 7, while he was thinking of contesting Glasgow, vacated by Lord William Bentinck's death, he was offered and accepted the Governorship of Jamaica. So in the autumn his old master Lord Wellesley became Fernhill's tenant, as his guest.

The Cabinet had entrusted him 'with the efficient and impartial protection of all Her Majesty's subjects' in Jamaica 'at a period of more than ordinary difficulty and importance'. Lord John Russell warned him (September 27, 1839) that 'no improvement in legislation and no ability in government' could avail unless planters and negroes both developed a less belligerent spirit.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>I believe, in 1842. See Clive Bayley MSS. July 3, 1842: 'I am still in fearful uncertainty regarding Frank. With too much reason to dread the worst I still from some circumstances cling to a faint hope'.

<sup>2</sup>*Colonial Records, Jamaica*, 137-240.

## ENGLAND AGAIN

The rival interests bent their energies to capture him. The Jamaican proprietors, headed by Lord St. Vincent, gave him a dinner. Lord Wellesley, who was emphatically of a different school of thought, expressed joy that Metcalfe had been chosen 'as the man best qualified to consummate the noblest work of humanity, justice and piety ever attempted by any state since the foundation of civilised society. . . . 'You have been called to this great charge by the free unsolicited choice of your Sovereign; and that choice is the universal subject of approbation by the voice of her whole people: no appointment ever received an equal share of applause.'<sup>1</sup>

Metcalfe was glad to get back into harness. He had been a ghost in England, and was unsuited for spectral wanderings. He was made a Privy Councillor, saw the Queen and kissed hands on his appointment. Then he set sail, August 14, 1839.

We shall not see him at rest again, so may let ourselves watch him on the voyage out. He found it intensely enjoyable. 'There is generally no situation in life in which one meets with greater kindness than on board of a Man of War.'<sup>2</sup> He 'never tired of hearing Dibdin's sea-songs' at the weekly concerts, and 'on more than one occasion he delighted the officers by singing these fine old nautical ballads . . . with great spirit and feeling'.<sup>3</sup> When they reached Port Royal he refused to land till next day because the gunroom had a party, and he meant to be in it. 'My Nerves having been relaxed, I suppose, by coming into a hot Climate, I was as much affected in quitting the Companions of my short voyage, as if they had been old Friends.'<sup>4</sup> However, he landed, September 26, and stepped briskly to business.

<sup>1</sup>August 2, 1839.

<sup>3</sup>Kaye, *Life of Metcalfe*, ii, 370.

<sup>2</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. October 1, 1839.

<sup>4</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. October 1, 1839.

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## CHAPTER XX

### GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA

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'I have risen in the East, and must set in the West. . . . It is a curious destiny.  
—Metcalf, June 20, 1839.

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Metcalf, addressing his Legislature, styled Jamaica 'the most wealthy and most populous country' where emancipation had 'been effected by the voluntary act of the state'. But in the planters' acquiescence there had been little that was voluntary. By the Act of 1833, on August 1, 1834, slavery made way for a modified bondage entitled apprenticeship, to last for seven years and ease the transition to complete freedom. The negroes found it a change in name only; flogging, the tread-wheel, and chain-gang remained. The Governor, Lord Sligo, predicted its failure, adding, 'If it fails', on the planters 'will rest the entire blame'.

The planters were fighting against such a rush of humanitarian enthusiasm in Great Britain as perhaps no other country has ever known. Indignation boiled over at the *Narrative of James Williams*, a negro boy of eighteen; it was published in June, 1837, and was followed by innumerable pamphlets and eyewitnesses' speeches. The British Parliament by a tiny majority abruptly terminated apprenticeship, as from August 1, 1838; and the Jamaica Assembly,<sup>1</sup> to prevent its own suspension by the Governor, reluctantly accepted its action.

Suspension came, nevertheless, and by the Assembly's own deed. At the end of 1838, it passed into a condition of passive resistance: 'having taken into mature consideration the aggressions which the British Parliament continue to make on the rights of the

<sup>1</sup>It consisted of 45 Members, elected on a franchise which extended to about 1,500 voters.

## GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA

people of this colony . . . they have come to the determination that they will best consult their own honour, the rights of their constituents and the peace and well-being of the colony, by abstaining from any legislative function, except such as may be necessary to preserve inviolate the faith of the island with the public creditor'. Sir Lionel Smith, the Governor, and his nominated Council of twelve (sometimes less) were left in the air, as an unpopular despotism. A Constitution nearly two centuries old became temporarily dead.

When some immemorial misery at last—with infinite effort, against truculent and unscrupulous opposition—is swept away, it is customary to observe that for any bitterness which survives both sides are of course to blame. Between the first victory, which abolished the slave trade (1807), and complete emancipation were thirty years of tremendous agitation. A whole generation of slaves were tormented by passions of fear and hope. When emancipation came, they were wildly suspicious that somehow and somewhere a power of enforcing labour would be kept, as it had been under apprenticeship. The Duke of Wellington, who had predicted that they would show no zest for heavy field work at low wages, proved once more the soundness of his judgment. They held exaggerated ideas of the dignity and liberty attaching to British citizen status; they wished to become men and women immediately, and most of all, British men and women.

Indeed, their independence of spirit astonished Metcalfe continually. He wrote, December 21, 1839. 'I do not suppose that there exists in any part of the World a labouring population less likely to submit to oppression, without making every practicable exertion to resist it. They are fully sensible of the rights of Freedom; and having stepped into them suddenly they are more tenacious of them, in every tittle, than those who have grown up in the possession of those rights from Infancy to Manhood.' Their behaviour was 'peaceable—in some respects admirable'. They were cheerful and merry, pleased to be

## GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA

noticed, an 'independent and thriving' community.<sup>1</sup> But they were 'as little subservient as any labouring population in the world'. Having been taught 'by circumstances and the instructions of others, to regard their former Masters as their Enemies, they are devoid of that habitual deference and respect for their Landlords and Superiors, which the rural population of other countries generally imbibe.'<sup>2</sup>

They showed themselves ungracious not only to their former masters, but to other benefactors also. On December 9, 1839, the Bishop of Jamaica sent up with strong endorsement the plaint of the Rev. C. T. May, curate of the parish of St. George, concerning the negroes of Birnam Wood, near Spring Hill. Birnam Wood, as readers of *Macbeth* will remember, does not visit other places but has to be visited. Mr. May accordingly used to visit the Spring Hill district once a week for the negroes' good, and he arranged with their masters to release them a trifle before their due time, so that attendance on his ministrations was 'a matter of imperative duty'. Taking a natural interest in their general conduct,<sup>3</sup> he noticed with pain 'that the labourers, instead of working in a proper and satisfactory manner to the Manager of the Estate, were really not performing six hours work in the day . . . he considered himself to be so far justified in consulting the interest of the proprietor, as to change his hour of attendance, and to visit them during the time allotted to themselves, they being the parties to be particularly benefitted'.

But even the British soldier does not always esteem Church Parade as he should. As to the ex-slaves, 'Although Mr. May made a point of being on the spot some time before shell-blow,

<sup>1</sup>October 16, 1839: *Colonial Records*.

<sup>2</sup>December 21, 1839: *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>Lord Olivier speaks of 'The peculiar position and character of the established Anglican Church as a department and subsidiary of the estate system', and quotes the Rev. J. B. Ellis (*The Diocese of Jamaica*, S.P.C.K., 1917): 'The Government was a negrophobic plantocracy and the established clergy sympathised with the Government'. *Jamaica the Blessed Isle*, 83 and 87.

## GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA

and the people were duly notified of his presence, so regardless were they of all instruction, that they one and all invariably turned their backs on him, and sauntered off to their respective habitations.' This was not all. He had established a Sunday School, and gave up three evenings a week 'to the teaching and lecturing of all persons who might choose to attend' at his own house, which involved a mile walk. They were unwilling to make even this trivial exertion, and for a preposterous reason. 'It appears that the generality of them profess to be of the Baptist persuasion, and are connected with the Society in Kingston, whither they proceed once a quarter, to receive their tickets of admission to the Lord's Table, pay the amount of the same, and return home, to live blind and indifferent to the abundant means provided for their spiritual wants by the Established Church.'

'I have always considered the Spring Hill people', said Mr. May, 'to be the very worst in that whole district.' They had waylaid his predecessor, and thrashed him.

Nature's bounty encouraged the negroes' hubris. Metcalfe noted how unlike to the conditions in European countries were those in Jamaica; it was 'no favour to give employment, but an assumed and almost acknowledged favour to give labour'. Masters, while the negroes were still slaves, had often granted them plots, to grow 'esculents for themselves and their families', and had even allowed them to sell the surplus produce. This short-sighted generosity now came to evil fruition. Greatly attached to their plots, these small-holders wanted Friday and Saturday free to cultivate them, which left the planters only four days' labour; at those times of the year when continuous work<sup>1</sup> was essential, employers had to pay higher wages for a full week. Wages 'had been settled more at the will of the labourer than at that of the employer. And this must continue to be the case

<sup>1</sup>Sugar required this, and its growers were having a hard time. Coffee, on the other hand, which did not need continuous care, was cheaper than it had been under either slavery or apprenticeship.



## GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA

until a great increase of the laboring population shall make labor cheaper, or until such a number of properties shall be thrown out of cultivation . . . as may produce the same effect'.

There was not enough downright hunger, and you must wait until an Act of God or of economic laws produced an adequate amount of distress.

But how was such distress to come? Accustomed to an appallingly low standard of living among the proletariat, in India or England, Metcalfe did not 'suppose that any peasantry in the world' had 'so many comforts or so much independence and enjoyment' as the Jamaican negroes. They were fond of divine service (Mr. May's experience notwithstanding), and thronged to it 'dressed in good clothes, and many of them mounted on horseback'. They sent their children to school and paid for their education. They subscribed to the building of churches, and in the Baptist community afforded their ministers 'a very respectable support'. Marriage was 'general' and their morals were said to have much improved; their sobriety was remarkable. They made Christmas a mad saturnalia, drumming and masking; but this, after all, was in a long line of sound Christian tradition.

The planters did their best to assist the insufficient urgings of hunger. They generally hesitated to proceed to actual ejection. They were few, and the negroes were many; also, the latter were beginning to get guns (for sport, they said, but even a sporting gun can be useful in a scrap). Rent was therefore the weapon used—frankly, as compulsion. Crushing charges, calculated according to the number of occupants, were laid on hovels where negroes lived; anyone, however young, who was capable of work had to work or pay rent. The labourers rarely made a contract for longer than a week, so houses were let for the same period, and rents lessened or remitted if the tenants worked at wages offered, and doubled or trebled if they preferred to work for themselves.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Colonial Records*: Metcalfe to Lord John Russell, December 30, 1839.

## GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA

Metcalfe's predecessor, Sir Lionel Smith,<sup>1</sup> had shown the negroes great kindness. He had remarked ('with just severity', says the Rev. William Knibb) that Jamaica's population was 'composed of white savages and black Christians'. And in his encouragement of the negroes Smith had been supported by the stipendiary magistrates. These had been sent from England when slavery was abolished, 'thrust among' the proprietors 'purposely to protect the apprentices'—since the unpaid magistracy consisted of planters and their agents. The stipendiaries were paid from home, and many of them brought out what it is customary to style the notions of unpractical sentimentalists, such as the Mother Country's now prevalent belief that slavery had been an abomination, and its abolition the most virtuous act in Parliament's record. The negroes looked on them as friends, so that the planters, on the principle of calling in Satan to deal with Satan, invoked the law in reprisal. The island's Attorney-General, appealed to, decided that two ordinary justices might summon parties on any complaint made, and exercise exclusive jurisdiction, with which any interference would be illegal. By this decision the proprietary interests foresaw their own members quietly side-stepping the stipendiaries' activities, which would gradually die of sheer inanition.

But the negroes' greatest champions were the Baptist missionaries. No Christian community had borne a finer part than theirs, in the new-born missionary activity which marked the first forty years of the century. Through the long-drawn-out agony before emancipation the slaves were sustained by their preachers, whose leader, William Knibb—'King Knibb', 'the Dan O'Connell of Jamaica'; 'Mr. Knibb possessed immense influence over the peasantry, and did not hesitate to proclaim the fact'<sup>2</sup>—burned for the martyrdom that had overtaken the heroic Wesleyan missionary, John Smith,<sup>3</sup> in Demerara. 'My death', he

<sup>1</sup>Like Metcalfe, he had seen Indian service. He was in command at Poona, in the Peshwa's outbreak, in 1817.

<sup>2</sup>W. J. Gardner, *A History of Jamaica*, 416.

<sup>3</sup>Condemned to be hanged, in 1823, after a shocking trial, he died in jail.

## GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA

cried,<sup>1</sup> 'is resolved on . . . the abettors of slavery rightly supposing that a Baptist missionary's blood would be the most acceptable offering to the expiring monster.' 'What have I and my poor people received? Taunts as foul as the odours of the bottomless pit, and persecutions restrained from blood only by the omnipotence of the Deity!'<sup>2</sup> 'The blasted influence of the destroyed monster would strangle the heaven-born child' of freedom.<sup>3</sup> Knibb held strong views on swearing. But it is hard to see what vigour or colour his speech could have gained by addition of mere ordinary curse-words.

Knibb celebrated the eve of emancipation with a gigantic watchnight service, which he punctuated with shouts, as the clock moved towards twelve. 'The hour is at hand! the monster is dying!' Midnight struck, and (he exultantly testified) 'The winds of freedom appeared to have been let loose. The very building shook at the strange yet sacred joy.'<sup>4</sup> In the early darkness of Liberty's first morning he presided over a solemn funeral, of whip, chain and collar, planting on their grave a Union Jack as a mighty congregation burst into song:

*Now, Slavery, we lay thy vile form in the dust,  
And, buried for ever, there let it remain!  
And rotted, and covered with infamy's rust,  
Be every man-whip and fetter and chain!*

The revels did not end here. On August 2, six children, sons and daughters of missionaries, rode in a carriage drawn by gaily caparisoned horses, while a thousand piccaninnies marched behind. Every child was finally given a glass of wine, and the Queen's health was drunk 'with rapturous applause'. Mr. Knibb had had a very good day, which closed with everyone singing 'We'll all go home together'.

Had Knibb and Metcalfe met, we can imagine with what blank uncomprehension and resentment each would have confronted

<sup>1</sup>March, 1838.

<sup>2</sup>May 25, 1838.

<sup>3</sup>August 17, 1838.

<sup>4</sup>John Howard Hinton, *Memoir of William Knibb*, 256ff.

## GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA

the other. They shared no plane of experience or opinion. To Metcalfe, Knibb was a dangerous maniac and revolutionary; and we can guess how Metcalfe's stately advice to artisans would have struck the Baptist missionary who knew what penury was, and knew, too, the fiendish cruelties of a servile system. We may think Lord Olivier not too generous to the Governor, 'whose talents lay chiefly in the line of conciliation of the exasperated planting community, and who had little progressive vision on behalf of the new freed community. He was a discreet and upright Conservative squire, and as such his record is good.'<sup>1</sup> But no one can grudge the same critic's tribute to the Baptist and (in hardly less degree) Moravian and Wesleyan missionaries:

'Not British Imperial genius for colonial administration or commercial development nor benevolent European "trusteeship" for "backward peoples" but officially unchartered and discouraged Christian Missionary influence has been the most effectual agent in promoting the development of Jamaica into a civilised human community.'<sup>2</sup>

Metcalfe began with a reasonably judicial attitude. It was only gradually that a sick man's longing for peace, and the habits of a lifetime of unquestioned power, made him incline to the proprietors' side. He found open war between the stipendiary magistrates and the planters with their unpaid magistracy. The negroes were madly with the former, and looked to the law, 'because the law, as thus administered, gave them a feeling of security'.<sup>3</sup> The missionaries were conducting a spirited journalistic campaign. The ex-slaves were trying to sell their labour on the dearest terms, the planters meant to buy it on the cheapest.<sup>4</sup> Knibb had forced the latter up—from their offer of 7½d. a day, with house added, for male adult labour—to a shilling (the Jamaica shilling was worth one and eightpence) with cottage, ground and free medical treatment. Metcalfe reported that the missionaries and stipendiary magistrates were urging the

<sup>1</sup>*Jamaica the Blessed Isle*, 184. <sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* 85. <sup>3</sup>Lord John Russell to Metcalfe.

<sup>4</sup>Evidence printed by Order of the House of Commons, March 27, 1839.

## GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA

negroes to be 'fickle and grasping', and interfered with 'free and voluntary dealing'. The stipendiaries retorted that some free and voluntary dealing needed to be interfered with.

Metcalf's mind, as fair a mind as ever worked, knew nothing of the under-dog's troubles. It started with a bias against any toad that showed itself restless, beneath any harrow whatsoever. Patience and quiet argument would win your case, if you had one. He agreed with Lord John Russell (September 17, 1839): 'If every man is to push to the utmost privileges which are vested in him for the good of the whole, no community can remain in harmony, and a free constitution becomes a calamity and not a blessing.' The negroes demanded good wages. Very well, let them settle down to provide steady continuous exertion. 'Why couldn't they be aisy; or, if not exactly aisy, then as aisy as they could?' They nursed unfair expectations.

He had orders to summon his sulking Assembly as soon as possible. It met, October 22, 1839, when he reminded members that Jamaica must not legislate against the general policy established for the whole Empire of which it was only a part. The putting through of Emancipation had involved much direct legislation over their heads. This would now cease. He could not promise it would never recur, however; that depended on them. They must legislate 'according to the spirit of the age, and on the principle of the perfect and legal freedom of every class'. 'Not only the eyes of our own country, but those of all the world, are upon us; and the interests of humanity, as well as the reputation of Jamaica, are involved in our proceedings.' If freedom were successful here, that would lead to its adoption in other lands.

The Assembly in reply lamented that 'Her Majesty's Government have come to the pre-determination of totally destroying the legislative rights of the colony', robbing them of their status as British subjects. However, they were good enough to draw a distinction between Her Majesty's Government and Her Parliament, and trusted that the latter (a hotbed of planters' interests) would see them past the knavish tricks of the former.

## GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA

From which reception the Governor was left to get what comfort he could. Its 'objectionable expressions' he ignored, 'hoping that they may be the last remains of past irritation'.

He presently decided against the stipendiary magistrates and the Baptist missionaries, proposing the former's abolition as from August, 1840. Lord John Russell would not support this; and Metcalfe saw that their abolition, while removing the one thing that was giving the planters deep offence, would mean individual hardship of stipendiaries who lost their job without warning. Also, it would be furiously resented by the negroes. He therefore suggested their gradual withdrawal as opportunity served; and said, with a confidence strong from his battles with recalcitrant fellow-countrymen in Delhi and Hyderabad, that he would engage if necessary to govern without stipendiaries and to see that the local magistrates behaved decently.<sup>1</sup>

As to the Baptists, he had not been prejudiced against them when he came. In India, their missionaries had been his friends, and in Jamaica he treated them like any other religious community, and 'subscribed with the same readiness to their chapels and schools'. But he resented their influence earned by fearless championship of the helpless. They accused the proprietors of being 'morally . . . slave-holders still. With perfect unconsciousness of guilt they still generally exhibit . . . the insanely contracted, proud, and partial principles of minds inveterate in iniquity'. He wrote to the Colonial Secretary, June 15, 1840:

'I am bound by my duty to inform your Lordship, that in my opinion the worst evil which hangs with a menacing aspect over the destinies of this island, is the influence exercised with baneful effect by the majority of the Baptist missionaries. It is the worst, because it is the most irremediable. Other evils and difficulties may yield to Time, which may also diminish the influence of the Baptist missionaries, or produce successors of a more Christian character; but long after their influence has ceased, its pernicious effect . . . will remain. I entirely renounce the opinion which I at one time entertained, that they had

<sup>1</sup>December 21, 1839: *Colonial Records*.

## GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA

done more good than harm. The good that they have done would have been done without them. The evil is exclusively their own.'

These observations the Home Government tactlessly published. Metcalfe told his sister<sup>1</sup> he thought this should not have been done, but showed surprise that his remarks were resented. The missionaries 'have become furious . . . they have, with a malignity which I may term diabolical, denounced me, most falsely of course, to their Negro Congregations as an Enemy'. He wrote of 'a rabid set' of 'selfish Men' who were determined 'to make white appear black. The other Missionaries, Wesleyan, Moravian, &c &c, pursue a different course, and consequently do nothing but good, and are most valuable, as well as the Clergy of the Church of England & Scotland'. Knibb's biographer thinks that the missionaries excepted from his blame should have felt disgraced, and not the Baptists; and there is something to be said for this view.<sup>2</sup>

It says much for Metcalfe's noble consistency that he refused to suppress attacks which he resented with a white heat of anger. 'Even the Baptist missionaries', he admitted, were useful 'when they confine themselves to their proper duties'. He grieved when they raised a party against him in England; 'I would rather have the good will and charitable feeling of all Men, but it is scarcely possible to secure these in a public situation'.<sup>3</sup> His government was going on well, he thought, if the Baptists would only be quiet and Her Majesty's Ministers would cease interfering.<sup>4</sup>

Other features of his rule can be mentioned only. He had to act as his own Lord Chancellor, and worked hard to reduce Court of Chancery arrears.<sup>5</sup> He was shocked by the 'prodigality' with which death sentences were passed, and declined to support the law in its sanguinary process, at the same time urging its amelioration—it was not good enough that the Governor should

<sup>1</sup>May 10, 1840: Clive Bayley MSS.

<sup>3</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. August 3, 1840.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* May 10, 1840.

<sup>2</sup>Hinton, *William Knibb*, 353.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* October 7, 1840.

## GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA

have to set right by executive action its shortcomings. Women petitioners he would not see, referring them to his Staff; but he would see anyone else. When a pestilence ravaged the 82nd Regiment in 1840, he would not rest until he had procured the troops a healthy residential station, thereby reducing the death-rate to one-sixth. He revelled in the climate of his own hill residence, at Highgate, only ten miles from his seat of government. The thermometer was between 68 and 76 all the year round, and 'a Lawn of perpetual verdure' was on every side. He kept wishing that a million of his own labouring countrymen could be transplanted here, to live in abundance with 'very moderate' effort.<sup>1</sup> His health was excellent, except for his cheek, which he regarded as an incurable infliction, to be as far as possible forgotten.<sup>2</sup> On the voyage out the ship's doctor had tried zinc ointment, which did a little good but caused so much irritation that he gave it up. The mountains made him turn equestrian again; he had 'a steady surefooted Poney that carries me well enough' where carriages could not go.<sup>3</sup>

In May, 1840, he mourned the death of Dr. Goodall, Provost of Eton, 'one of the best of Men, one of the kindest of Tutors, and one of the most affectionate of Friends'. He denied a report that he was going back to India, as Governor-General.<sup>4</sup> He studied with deep absorption the French Revolution,<sup>5</sup> which seemed to light up his own problems in a people's sudden passage from serfdom to freedom. In 1841 he was distressed by the death of his Aunt Lady Monson,<sup>6</sup> and even more by that of Georgiana Smyth's young son;<sup>7</sup> he sent such consolation as is possible under such circumstances. In 1840, poor Henry Studholme, in India, took his own life:

'He fell a victim, I grieve to say, to bad habits, which he had not energy of character enough to shake off, after they had once fastened on him. He was in other respects I believe harmless, &

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. January 23 and August 3, 1840.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* June 15, 1840.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* May 18, 1840.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* April 18, 1841.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* November 3, 1839, and May 10, 1840.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* August 3, 1840, and May 7, 1841.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.* letters of January to March, 1841.



## GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA

only his own Enemy. A Merciful God will I humbly hope pardon his offences and grant him greater happiness in the World to come, than he could ever with such habits have obtained in this.'

His father turned to advise Georgiana about a memorial tablet: 'The Device of two Flowers on the same Stem, the one cut off & returning to the Earth whence it sprung, the other remaining, the only one left, is beautiful & affecting . . . but the Flower so cut off will spring again from the Earth & rear its Head to Heaven.'

He considered he had done the work for which he had been sent out; animosities were subsiding. His ulcer called for better treatment, and he still pined to live in the English countryside, with a seat in Parliament. He resigned therefore, and told Georgiana, February 24, 1842, that his resignation had been accepted. With a conviction that his grip on the things of this world was loosening, he gave away his effects: his fine carriage to the President of the Council, his beautiful carriage horses to the General Assembly's Speaker, his favourite hack to the Secretary to Government. He distributed cash payments to clerks and servants, almost as if he were still 'The King of Dihlee'.

Somehow everyone, not excluding the belligerent Baptist missionaries, suddenly felt that something unusual in the way of character and selflessness was passing from them; and the negroes, their pastors not gainsaying them, knelt as the Governor went through their streets for the last time, on May 21, 1842.

## CHAPTER XXI

### LONGINGS AND MISERIES

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'We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage:  
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down  
And ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live,  
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh  
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues  
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,  
Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out;  
And take upon 's the mystery of things,  
As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out,  
In a walled prison, packs and sets of great ones  
That ebb and flow by the moon.'

*King Lear.*

'What is it that moves me to . . . the cares and uncertainties of public life and distant service? Is it pure patriotism and a sense of duty, or is it foolishness and lurking ambition? . . . I have no years left to spare, and few to fall back upon, if I ever return. . . .'—Metcalfe, January 19, 1843.

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There is little left to relate, but physical misery and spiritual courage. On the voyage home his ulcer grew worse. He reached England, July 2, 1842, and immediately got into touch with the best doctors. They decided on the use of caustic, a prolonged agony. After three weeks he reported that he was 'not now in much pain', but still suffered 'some distressing effects from the applications' and was likely to be an invalid for some time. The doctors, on August 4, said he had done better than they expected. 'On the whole, the diseased part looks better than it has done for many years.' He remained rootedly pessimistic, knowing death's sentence within him. On December 12, he was told he might 'return Home' (as he always thought of Georgiana's house, feeling an exile in the splendour of his own Fernhill) 'without apprehension of a return of malady. . . . I do not quite

## LONGINGS AND MISERIES

agree with the Doctors as to their having effected a perfect cure'.<sup>1</sup>

The longing that possessed him all through these years, to find at last a rest with his beloved sister, he himself paying all possible costs of herself and all who belonged to her, is very moving, as he iterates and reiterates it, most of all in the letters of his anguish now. These letters are such as one can hardly bear to read. His suffering was intense and without remission. His refusal to make any great matter of his suffering was wonderful.

As for his 'lurking fancy for a seat in Parliament',<sup>2</sup> as much as ever what he 'would highly' that he 'would holily', and would not stoop to 'the usual means of obtaining a seat—such as bribery and corruption, canvassing, and so forth'. He felt hurt that since his return Her Majesty's Ministers had paid him no attention. Applicants for jobs were writing to him, saying that they understood that he was going to become Governor-General of Canada; and friends who knew his fearful physical condition wrote begging him not to consent to do anything so foolish. But he was convinced that the Cabinet had nothing further of any kind, for 'a statesman known to be saturated through and through with Liberal opinions':<sup>3</sup>

'I have no more idea of going to Canada than of flying in the air. Not a word has ever passed between Her Majesty's Ministers and me indicative of any desire on their part to call for my services, or on mine for employment. . . . The only thing that I have the least inclination for is a seat in Parliament, of which, in the present predominance of Toryism among the constituencies, there is no chance for a man who is for the abolition of the Corn Laws, Vote by Ballot, Extension of the Suffrage, Amelioration of the Poor Laws for the benefit of the Poor, equal Rights to all Sects of Christians in matters of Religion, and equal Rights to

<sup>1</sup>See Kaye's quotations from Metcalfe's letters to his Secretary, Captain J. M. Higginson. Also, Clive Bayley MSS., letters written during 1842.

<sup>2</sup>Letter to Lord Monson, February 10, 1843.

<sup>3</sup>Kaye, *Life of Metcalfe*, ii, 452.

## LONGINGS AND MISERIES

all Men in civil matters; and everything else that to his understanding seems just and right; and, at the same time, is totally disqualified to be a demagogue; shrinks like a sensitive plant from public meetings; and cannot bear to be drawn from close retirement, except by what comes in the shape of real or fancied good to his country.'

He was, nevertheless, 'looking eagerly to the opening of the Parliamentary campaign' next month, though without much hope 'of any national good' from it.<sup>1</sup>

The Government were, however, thinking of him, and waiting till there was better report of his illness. This seemed to come; and he was commanded to dine at Windsor, where he met Sir Robert Peel.

'The stranger advanced in rather an awkward, or, perhaps, I ought to say, in a shy and unassuming manner, and I also advanced equally awkward I have no doubt. I had never seen the gentleman before. He said, "Sir Charles Metcalfe, I presume?" to which I bowed, and intimated assent. He added, with a little hesitation, seeing that I did not know him, "Sir Robert Peel". I made another bow. We talked together for a few minutes, when the Queen and Prince Albert entered, and Sir Robert Peel and I did not find ourselves together again. . . . Although he said something complimentary to me on my government of Jamaica, there was much reserve and want of freedom in his conversation.'

Then, on January 14, 1843, while he was enjoying his last weeks of happiness with his sister, at a house he had taken at Honiton, in Devonshire, Lord Stanley wrote, expressing pleasure to have learnt that his health was much improved, and asking him to call, if he were 'disposed again to take upon yourself most honorable, but, at the same time, very arduous duties in the public service'. Four days later, Metcalfe had accepted the Governor-Generalship of Canada, with a joyless resolution, and was gazetted, January 30, 1843, 'Captain-General and Governor-General-in-Chief of the Provinces of Canada, New Brunswick

<sup>1</sup>Letter to R. D. Mangles, January 13, 1843.

## LONGINGS AND MISERIES

and Nova Scotia'. He had long talks with Lord Stanley, the Colonial Secretary, whose theme and woeful consequences will emerge in the next chapter. They perplexed his mind and deepened his misery. 'I do not see my way so clearly as I wish. Neither do I expect to do so before I reach my destination.' 'I allowed what I fancy to be public duty to prevail . . . without being sure that I have done right.' 'I never undertook anything with so much reluctance, or so little hope of doing good; but I could not bring myself to say No.' Admirers made him sit for a portrait and a bust; he endured the inevitable complimentary dinners, and saw the Queen. Then a dying man sailed from Liverpool, March 4, 1843.

In a winter of exceptional duration and severity he reached Halifax, March 18: was entertained by the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia, and addressed by the Council and Assembly. Then he went on, and disembarked at Boston, 'that famed place where the rebellion broke out which ended in the separation of our North American colonies from the mother country, since which conclusion the original rebellion has been designated the glorious revolution, or the establishment of American independence.

*Why treason never prospers what's the reason?*

*Why, when it prospers, none dare call it treason.*

Be that as it may the people of Boston—Governor, Mayor and Grandees were all very civil and kind.'

From Boston to Kingston was one mass of snow. He took the railway to Albany, and crossed the Hudson on a sleigh: took the railway again for Utica, but snow enforced a return and delay. He had a foot swollen with gout or rheumatism, and encased in a large fur-lined cloth boot. 'Nevertheless, I have not *felt* the cold' as he had felt it often in Devonshire.<sup>1</sup>

At Albany, Van Buren, Governor of the State of New York and an ex-President, paid him a somewhat informal call, 'very

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. March 24, 1843.

## LONGINGS AND MISERIES

civil and kind', and said he would return two hours later and show him the Capitol and other public buildings; 'and as I know not how to decline what was kindly meant, I must submit, although I should be better pleased to remain quietly where I am, for I find it very difficult to keep my footing where every inch is ice or snow.' 'Governor Metcalfe, you'll admit, I think' (said one of Albany's public men), 'that this is a clever body of snow for a young country.' Metcalfe was pushing on to relieve the previous Governor-General, who was so ill that his death was almost hourly expected. A thaw, which would make Lake Ontario impassable, was dreaded. 'Our hopes of a speedy and the least uncomfortable journey possible rest on a continuance of cold.'

He reached Utica; the remaining 127 miles to Kingston had to be by sleigh. 'In ordinary winters, and with an ordinary quantity of snow', a day and a half would have sufficed; they now took nearly four days. Sleighs frequently upset; horses sank, and had to be dug out. Off the track there was not an inch of traversable surface. 'In the floundering which took place, when all were out to remedy a difficulty, a gentleman or a servant was often to be seen with his head under the snow and his heels in the air.' Metcalfe found the journey, from its novelty, amusing. 'I was taken great care of by all.' The American contractor was particularly kind, almost always standing on one side of Metcalfe's sleigh to balance it. The company, when the expedition came to a dead stop, compelled Metcalfe to go on ahead in a 'cutter' (a light open sleigh), to reach shelter and send back help. 'Floundering through the snow to get to the cutter, with many others doing the same in their kind endeavours to help me, the scene was so ridiculous that I was in a roar of laughter the whole way.'

They crossed a bridge, placarded with the warning, 'Condemned Bridge': 'our American friend opened the door of the sleigh in order that we might have a chance of escape if the sleigh fell through.' The bridge held, and he crossed the St. Lawrence

## LONGINGS AND MISERIES

and Lake Ontario, 'the country generally looking like a twelfth cake—the ground resembling the sugar, and the trees and houses the ornaments'.

'Nevertheless, although I adhere to my habits of having no fire or heat in my bedroom, and of washing all over and bathing my feet in cold water, I do not feel the severe cold as in Devonshire. The damp there, and the want of it here, I conclude make the difference.' He was disposed to like the climate, which seemed to be doing him good, and 'had nearly forgotten' his face; much as it was when he left England, it was being attacked by the doctor daily, with nitric acid and arsenic.<sup>1</sup>

He reached Kingston, March 29, 'in a close-bodied sleigh drawn by four greys . . . a thorough-looking Englishman', said a newspaper reporter, 'with a jolly visage', though looking older than his age. Next day he took over from his predecessor, Sir Charles Bagot, and was immediately immersed in an intensity of business, which prevented his ever taking exercise but kept him in good spirits. He noted that his income was less than in Jamaica and his establishment larger and costlier; and even in Jamaica he had had to spend from his own fortune. 'This, however, is a matter of little consequence.'

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. April 9, 1843.

## CHAPTER XXII

### CANADA

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'The general course which I propose to pursue towards the Council, is to treat them with the confidence and cordiality due to the station which they occupy; to consult them not only whenever the law or established usage requires that process, but also whenever the importance of the occasion recommend it; and whenever I conceive that the public service will be benefitted by their aid and advice. At the same time, I must be on my guard against their encroachments.'—Metcalf to Lord Normanby, April 24, 1843. 'The truth is, he did not comprehend responsible government at all, nor, from his Indian experience, is this wonderful.'—Lord Grey.

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**I**n India Metcalfe was a lonely revolutionary, and among the Oligarchy of England an advanced radical. In Canada he fought an obstinate rearguard action for conservatism. Canadian historians have suggested that he was chosen for his diehard qualities, and deliberately sent to quench the smoking flax of democracy.

The matter is not quite as simple as that.

In the winter of 1837-1838, Lower Canada had been shaken by a mainly French rebellion, and Upper Canada by one whose sinews were chiefly Irish and American. From 'Hunters' Lodges' along the border democratic zealots sallied out, and ships loaded with weapons and explosives openly crossed the Lakes and St. Lawrence. The most notorious of these ships, the *Caroline*, was cut out from an American wharf by loyalist Canadians, and sent blazing down Niagara Falls. The United States' President, Van Buren, a man capable of seeing the provocation his side had given as well as received, prevented this infringement of sovereignty from passing into official war.

It has been generally overlooked that one cause of rebellion's failure was the fact that Great Britain was just about to sever the



## CANADA

last links of slavery, after decades of agitation had driven deep a general conviction of the institution's cruelty and vileness. The American filibusters' favourite name for themselves, 'Liberators', and their shouts against Canada's 'Egyptian bondage', were answered by scornful remarks about the chains whose 'clanking' sounded across the frontier. Perhaps morality does matter after all, even in public affairs. The Canadians thought well of themselves, in comparison with their neighbours; and also, in comparison with the British at home. 'If we have not the wealth of England, neither have we its landed oligarchy, to crush down the industrial classes; if we lack the population and cotton-fields of the United States, we also lack its rabble and its slaves.'<sup>1</sup> 'Eliza escaping on the ice' may be a figure of fun in retrospect to our own times; but among the Canadians who repelled the 'Liberators' fugitive negroes played an energetic part. The starving labourer who was transported for rick-burning or sedition may seem to some an amusing foundation for nations whose manners are not quite as polished as those of 'the landed oligarchy'; but his descendants, while speaking of the land which exiled him as 'home', have no intention of letting a squirearchy be re-established over themselves.

The Rebellion, 'although a military failure, was a political success'.<sup>2</sup> After it was crushed, Lord Durham was sent out (1838) as Governor-General. His famous Report was more radical than seemed necessary to the Cabinet which appointed him, but it determined the future. He pointed out that the only way—to be adopted before too late—to counteract the overwhelming power and prestige of the United States, an imposing shadow over a thinly peopled country, was to give Canadians a nationality (the foundations had been laid already, by their magnificent defence in the 1812 War and against the recent unauthorised invasions). The two Canadas were united,<sup>3</sup> and received a grant of respon-

<sup>1</sup>John MacMullen, *The History of Canada*, 317.

<sup>2</sup>George E. Wilson, *The Life of Robert Baldwin*, 66.

<sup>3</sup>The Canada Act, 1840.

## CANADA

sible government, 1841: a Legislative Council nominated by the Crown, and an elected Assembly.

For the next ten years the situation in many features recalls that in India after the World War. British statesmen afterwards held themselves entitled to comment with some severity on Metcalfe's inability to see what responsible government implied. But they were themselves reluctant to make up their minds, and especially loth to make them up in a liberal sense. Under Lord Durham's successor, Lord Sydenham,<sup>1</sup> a generous programme of public benefits was expected to deflect attention away from politics. When the Canadians continued recalcitrant, there were moments of despair. If they 'are not with us', Peel wrote to Lord Aberdeen, May 16, 1842, 'or if they will not cordially support and sustain those measures which we consider necessary for their good government and for the maintenance of a safe connexion with them, let us have a friendly separation whilst there is yet time'. And anything, even permanent civil disunity and a policy of 'divide and rule', seemed better than the spread of the dreaded radicalism of the United States. 'The French Canadians, if rightly managed', Peel pointed out to Charles Buller, September 10, 1841, 'are the natural instrument, by which the Government could keep in check the democratic and American tendencies of Upper Canada.' It is fair to remember that this part of his suggested duty was ignored by every Governor-General.

Canada was moving 'not towards the British Constitution as understood at that time, but towards democracy',<sup>2</sup> a fact which Metcalfe discovered with misgiving. Canadian leaders were as blind to what was inevitably coming, as the Home Government was. Robert Baldwin wanted in Upper Canada, his own province, an 'image and transcript' of the British Constitution, which 'could be effected without repealing a single law. The only change necessary was in administrative practice'. 'As a Canadian

<sup>1</sup>Charles Edward Poulett Thomson. Created Baron Sydenham, 1840.

<sup>2</sup>W. P. Morrell, *British Colonial Policy in the Age of Peel and Russell*, 62.

## CANADA

subject of Her Majesty', he told Lord Durham, 'I object first to the alteration of the Constitution in the minutest particular, and secondly to the sacrifice of any single branch of the British Prerogative.' But Canadian democratic tendencies were strengthened steadily by the stiff unteachable conservatism of the British oligarchy. Baldwin was refused an interview by the Colonial Secretary (who played a part similar to Lord Birkenhead's, on the eve of the Indian Round Table Conference). Lord John Russell, a future Colonial Secretary, consented to see him unofficially, and to Baldwin's modest statement that Canadians merely desired to be allowed to run their own local affairs objected that a self-governing Canada might decline to help the Mother Country in a foreign war. As of course it might.

Metcalf's three immediate predecessors as Governor-General all had very brief terms. He summarised their differing attitudes towards the problem of Responsible Government not unfairly:

'Lord Durham had no difficulty in writing at leisure in praise of Responsible Government, which had no effect during his administration, and was treated by him as a general question, without any definition of the details by which it was to be carried into effect. Lord Sydenham put the idea in force without suffering himself to be much restrained by it; and for the greater part of his administration it had no existence, and was only coming into operation when he died. Sir Charles Bagot yielded to the coercive effect of Lord Sydenham's arrangements; and thence Responsible Government, as understood by its extreme advocates, is said to be Sir Charles Bagot's policy; but though he yielded to the extent of calling certain parties into his Council, he had not the least intent of surrendering his power into their hands; and for the remainder of his time the contest was staved off by his illness; but that very cause rendered it more certain for his successor.' *'Now, I conceive is the first time when the scheme of Responsible Government, as here construed, has come forward to be carried fully into effect in any colony. . . .*



SIR CHARLES THEOPHILUS  
METCALFE, BART  
Governor-General of Canada

*From an engraving in the possession of Mrs. Hardcastle,  
Ringwood, Hants. Original believed to be in Ottawa*



## CANADA

Now comes the tug of war.<sup>1</sup> It was unfortunate that he so regarded matters. The habit of his life had not qualified him for concession. He had learnt to look for battle everywhere.

Presently he claimed<sup>2</sup> that 'this favorite system of Responsible Government' had 'never been so carried into practice' as by himself, 'excepting during the period of my predecessor's incapacity from sickness, when the powers of the Government were entirely assumed by the Council.' Exactly here lay the point he failed to see! Events had already carried the case against him. In seeking to reverse what had happened, he was as ill advised as those officials in India when the World War ended, who expected Indians to sink back contentedly to their insignificance of the days before their country was combed out of British for the Front. Bagot's long sickness had taken away Metcalfe's ground, before ever the latter's struggle began.

So had the personal qualities of Metcalfe's two immediate predecessors. As in Jamaica, where he followed Lionel Smith, he was unlucky, following men so esteemed. Sydenham was only forty-one when he died; and his radiant vivacity, which raced out in joyous letters, charmed assistance to him, and disarmed criticism, even when he was busied in acts of dubious morality, such as gerrymandering elections. His 'exuberant opportunism, his mercurial tact and versatility, his engaging address, his almost incredible powers of winning individuals to his service',<sup>3</sup> were the driving force behind a programme of benefits which made it hard for patriotic Canadians to refuse support. 'He was no mere wizard, but a very practical good fairy.'<sup>4</sup> 'What do you think of this', he asked his brother exultantly, 'you miserable people in England, who spend two years upon a single measure?' 'The people know that I am ready at all hours and times to do business and that what I have once undertaken I will carry through; so they follow my star.' In obeying his instructions—to effect the

<sup>1</sup>May 12, 1843: to the Secretary for the Colonies.

<sup>2</sup>December 26, 1843: to the same.

<sup>3</sup>Chester Martin, *Empire and Commonwealth*, 248.

<sup>4</sup>Morrell, 49.

## CANADA

Union of the Canadas and give the people 'a real voice in the control of their own affairs without conceding the demand for responsible government'—he made lavish use of 'soft soap' and 'blarney'.

'I have told the people plainly, that as I cannot get rid of my responsibility to the Home Government, I will place no responsibility on the Council; that they are a Council for the Governor to consult, but no more.'<sup>1</sup> Yet the same letter says: 'The people have been carefully taught to believe that the governor is nobody, and the Executive Council the real power, and that by the governor himself.'

Such men often do immense good. But they sow difficulties which their orthodox successors have to harvest in sorrow. Sydenham's letters are exhilarating reading. Metcalfe did not find them so. Published soon after he reached Canada, they added to his problems.

Sydenham was followed by Sir Charles Bagot, 'the perfect man of the world . . . trained from his youth up in the devious ways of devious governments'.<sup>2</sup> He 'came from the not yet exhausted Eighteenth Century, and had its flippancy, its lightness, its courtesy, and its courage'.<sup>3</sup> Metcalfe had the courtesy and courage, and like Bagot endured a 'lonely vigil with death'.<sup>4</sup> But flippancy and lightness? Hardly. Bagot was 'worthy perhaps of a prominent and kindly portraiture by Thackeray, for he dwelt in Vanity Fair, and possessed most of its pleasing ways'.<sup>5</sup> Metcalfe had long dwelt in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and his personal grimness and lack of display earned him the nicknames of 'Old Squaretoes', 'the old squaw', 'the old Hypocrite', and 'Charles the Simple'. The irony of their contrast was deepened by the fact that Bagot was an old-fashioned Tory, saved by cynicism and humanity, whereas Metcalfe was a gener-

<sup>1</sup>December 12, 1839: letter to his brother.

<sup>2</sup>Stephen Leacock, *Mackenzie, Baldwin, Lafontaine, Hincks*, 134-135.

<sup>3</sup>J. L. Morison, *Sir Charles Bagot*, 24.

<sup>4</sup>Leacock, 134.

<sup>5</sup>Morison, 4.

## CANADA

ous believer in the rights of man, though disabled by a too rooted resolution to make those rights come slowly and only as men showed they deserved them and could be trusted with them. Bagot's wit and detachment (which refused to make a pothole of either his political troubles or his own dying) light up his delightful letters and despatches. When a crisis came, he 'spoke the language of mastery, and his courage flashed like a rapier'.<sup>1</sup> But until it came he smiled at the absurdity of his position, remarking that 'the pomps and circumstance attendant upon the great station of top-sawyer in these woods scarcely compensates for the constant effort to keep oneself upright and steady on the log'. Canadian writers turn distastefully and resentfully from this picture of valour and gaiety, to his successor, whose despatches were 'ponderous and stately, severely honest and wilfully wooden', their author refusing to allow a 'human glow to touch the stern dignity of the Queen's representative'. They 'toe a line, they follow a course, they stand four-square'.<sup>2</sup> Gibbon Wakefield himself admitted: 'the greatness of the moral qualities have left too little room for intellectual activity on the same grand scale, and dulness of the faculty of perception was obvious, and a consequent slowness in estimating the character and discovering the motives of other men.'<sup>3</sup> Even his 'liberalism was nullified by a rigidity of mind which had been cultivated and perfected by the unchanging East'.<sup>4</sup> It is a heavy indictment. And to-day critics are less than ever placated by the reminder that Metcalfe had done exceptional service in that unchanging East: 'In face of such a record it seems almost a pity that Sir Charles Metcalfe should have abandoned the coloured populations of Jamaica and Hyderabad to assume the care of the uncoloured people of Canada.'

When Metcalfe arrived, of the two mutually hostile groups in Upper Canada, the Reformers and Conservatives, the latter

<sup>1</sup>Chester Martin, 265.

<sup>2</sup>Leacock, 179.

<sup>3</sup>*A View of Sir Charles Metcalfe's Government of Canada*, 10.

<sup>4</sup>Leacock, 179.



## CANADA

were still exultant over the Rebellion's failure, and some would have liked the gallows and shooting file to be given more victims. They pointed to the bad example of the United States, as an argument why even limited self-government should be yet further modified or altogether withdrawn. The Reformers resented the refusal of financial control of their country's administration. This left the people in practice powerless; the position had not changed substantially since the pre-Durham era, when the complaint was made: 'Such is the patronage of the colonial office, that the granting or withholding of supplies is of no political importance, unless as an indication of the opinion of the country concerning the character of the government.'<sup>1</sup>

Lord Stanley reminded Metcalfe, November 1, 1843, that patronage was 'an instrument, effective in all governments, but peculiarly so in colonial ones', to be kept out of his Council's hands, or 'they will at once strengthen a party already too compact and too powerful, and tend to reduce your authority, as I doubt not they would desire, to nullity'. This resolution was reinforced by the spectacle of the 'Spoils' system openly swaying democratic America; the Home Government disliked such crudity. The reader will understand that for the melancholy story that follows, the blame generously heaped on Metcalfe only should be distributed among several parties.

As to Lower Canada, 'a relic of the historical past preserved, by isolation, as Siberian mammoths are preserved in ice', it contained 'in solid and unyielding mass, above a million of unassimilated and politically antagonistic Frenchmen . . . an unprogressive, submissive, courteous, and, though poor, not unhappy people . . . governed by the priest, with the occasional assistance of the notary'. They would make 'excellent factory-hands, if Canada had a market for her manufactures'.<sup>2</sup> That happy consummation was as yet far off; for the present, towards the rest of Canada they turned an aspect of morose racialism,

<sup>1</sup>*Seventh Report of the Committee of Grievances* (Toronto, 1835), iii.

<sup>2</sup>Goldwin Smith, *The Political Destiny of Canada*, 10-11.

## CANADA

stigmatising as *Vendus* those few Frenchmen who showed willingness to co-operate with the Government.

Metcalfé was bewildered utterly by what had happened under all three of his immediate predecessors, and unable to read in it his own best course. Beginning with Durham's Report, its 'meaning seems to have been' (he hesitatingly told Lord Stanley)<sup>1</sup> 'that the Governor should conduct his administration in concordance with the public feeling, represented by the popular branch of the Legislature, and it is obvious that without such concordance the Government could not be *successfully administered*'. The term 'Responsible Government', now 'in general use' as the Reformers' war-cry, was derived from the Report's marginal notes, but there was 'no evidence in what manner Lord Durham would have carried out the system which he advocated, as it was not brought into effect during his administration'. Turning to Durham's successor, Metcalfé found himself still worse puzzled. Lord Sydenham's despatches were against Responsible Government 'in the sense in which it is here understood';<sup>2</sup> he regarded the Governor as the Responsible Government, with officers responsible indeed, but to him, not to the Assembly. The Governor gathered up everything in his own person and was himself responsible to the British Cabinet. A conception, in fact, not unlike Milton's idea of Eve and Adam, both of them 'responsible' but

*He to God only, she to God in him—*

a succinct summary of the whole duty of woman, which I have often had brought approvingly to my notice, by Hindus of the old devout school, as showing the essential soundness of Milton's mind. And Metcalfé (as Canadian historians never forget) came from India.

Sydenham's despatches being so clear, Metcalfé found it 'beyond measure surprising that he adopted the very form of

<sup>1</sup>April 25, 1843.

<sup>2</sup>August 5, 1843.

## CANADA

administration . . . most assuredly calculated . . . to produce or confirm the notion of Responsible Government which he had before reprobated'. Trying to steer a moderate course, with moderate lukewarm men drawn from both Reformers and Conservatives—to depress the French and ignore 'the Family Compact'—to win over the less extreme Reformers by transacting business through provincial secretaries and heads of departments, out of these forming a Council of executive officers, of whom he required that they should all be members of the Legislature and a majority of them members of the elected chamber, Sydenham had made their tenure of office dependent on their having a majority in that chamber. This was 'the very form and practice of the Home Government', and 'rendered it inevitable that the Council should obtain and ascribe to themselves . . . the character of a Cabinet of Ministers'. If Lord Sydenham 'did not intend this, he was more mistaken than from his known ability one would suppose to be possible'; if he did intend it, 'with his eyes open' he 'carried into practice that very theory of Responsible Government which he had pronounced his opinion decidedly against'. Yet in fact, Metcalfe noted, getting every moment more deeply perplexed, Sydenham consulted his Council little (treating it pretty much as British Post-War Premiers treated the House of Commons) and carried on administration according to his own judgment. His adroitness and personal charm served him well, but towards the end of his time they began to prove ineffective, when the excluded French joined with the equally embittered extreme Reformers, who drew into alliance the extreme Conservatives also. 'The two extreme parties in Upper Canada most violently opposed to each other coalesced solely' to turn out the Ministry, and with French assistance pressed Sydenham so hard that he escaped the Assembly's vote of no confidence in his Council only by negotiating with *Vendus* and persuading five members of his Council to retire in their enemies' favour. The new Council thus forced on him included men he disliked and some who held extreme

## CANADA

notions of the Council's authority, maintaining that the Governor-General had no choice but to follow its guidance in all matters.

Bagot inherited the difficulties Sydenham had in part created, and he saw the perils as clearly as Metcalfe was presently to see them. 'I know well by what a slender thread the adhesion of the colony will hang whenever we consent to leave the matter entirely in its own hands.'<sup>1</sup> But he saw also an immense deal which entirely escaped Metcalfe. Exuberantly greeted as sent 'by that great Conservative party in whose able hands our Sovereign has been pleased to place' (it was piously added, 'under Divine Providence') 'the rule of the British Empire', he quietly noted 'the traps laid in their addresses to identify me with their party to the exclusion of all others'. 'I am convinced', he told Lord Stanley, 'that the country is to be held upon no other terms' than equal acceptance of all groups and races, 'but I believe that it may be held upon these'.<sup>2</sup> In stirring metaphor, the Colonial Secretary urged him to do his duty, not merely well but in the right company and with the right assistance. 'If the stream be still against you, bend your back to your oar like a man, and above all, take none into your crew who will not bend their backs too.'<sup>3</sup> Bagot answered: 'whether the doctrine of responsible government is openly acknowledged or only tacitly acquiesced in, virtually it exists'.<sup>4</sup> Stanley's tart reminder that, however he might choose to act with his Executive Council, he was 'supreme and irresponsible, except to the Home Government, for your acts in your executive capacity',<sup>5</sup> did not deflect him. Mr. Glazebrook remarks that he was 'too well bred to distinguish outwardly between those whom he did, and those whom he did not, like'.<sup>6</sup> No doubt that is so, and a life spent in diplomatic employment had made it second nature. But Bagot did not dislike people easily or often; and he was one of those Conservatives

<sup>1</sup>To Lord Stanley, January 26, 1842.

<sup>3</sup>May 18, 1842.

<sup>5</sup>December 3, 1842.

<sup>2</sup>January 26, 1842.

<sup>4</sup>October 28, 1842.

<sup>6</sup>*Bagot in Canada*, 121.

who—however they may disapprove of the idea of a social order without hereditary privileges and equally hereditary disabilities—when they find such an order in the United States or the Dominions rather like it. He wrote without condemnation that Francis Hincks, after Baldwin the Reformers' leading politician, was 'at heart radicalissimus'; and offered him the post of Inspector-General, as being 'indisputably, and without any comparison, the best public accountant in the country'. Hincks in his *Reminiscences* testifies to Bagot's 'strict impartiality', a quality he showed still more strikingly when his glance fell on the French. Bagot saw them resigned 'to a sullen and reluctant submission or to a perverse, but passive, resistance', and wrote sympathetically of 'the honour and pride which their separate origin naturally inspires'.<sup>1</sup> He did more than understand their bitterness; he voluntarily offered them posts in his Executive Council, a deed which made the Duke of Wellington<sup>2</sup> so angry that for days he could talk of nothing else. 'What a fool the man must have been, to act as he has done! and what stuff and nonsense he has written! and what a bother he makes about his policy and his measures, when there are no measures but rolling himself and his country in the mire!' Tory journals in Canada shouted that he was 'radical', 'puppet', 'old woman', 'apostate', 'renegade descendant of old Colonel Bagot who fell at Naseby fighting for his King'. Bagot was merely amused.

Metcalf was appalled, following a Governor-General who had shown himself prepared to work with any group willing and able to form a Ministry—the name his successor, to his dismay and disgust, found the Canadians using. 'The Council are now spoken of by themselves and others generally as "the Ministers", "the Administration", "the Cabinet", "the Government" and so forth. Their pretensions are according to this new nomenclature. They regard themselves as a responsible Ministry, and expect that the policy and conduct of the Governor shall be sub-

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Lord Stanley, September 26, 1842.

<sup>2</sup>Lady Bagot was the Duke's niece.

servient to their views and party purposes.<sup>1</sup> He denied their right to consider they possessed the responsibility of 'a united Cabinet' to the elected Assembly.<sup>2</sup> He saw them responsible individually, in isolation, as departmental chiefs only. The gulf between his mind and the Canadian mind (in all its varieties) was deep and wide. Bagot's dereliction from duty he charitably interpreted as because of his illness, which 'threw the current business of administration almost entirely' into the Council's power, and 'tended much to confirm these notions' (of their authority), dropping the reins of government into hands which were improperly in possession of them, so that the next Governor-General's duty was to reclaim them.

In one respect—toleration—Metcalf was willing to go every bit as far as Bagot. But his mind was less elastic, less able to free itself from dominant convictions, less able to improvise ways to meet emergency. The more one studies Metcalfe's ideas, the more miraculous appears Canada's continuance in the Empire. He was a man of exceptional beauty of character—generous, just and humane to the point of eccentricity: 'the Christian gentleman of whom it is not enough to say that nothing would persuade him to take an unfair advantage; he can hardly persuade himself to take a fair one. It may be questioned whether he would train his own horse for a race if he thought that the other horses would not be trained. . . . Some may think I am describing a goose; but such is the man. . . . He is really without a temper. I never witnessed such patience under provocation.'<sup>3</sup> His opponent Francis Hincks admitted his 'uniform courtesy'. Mr. Leacock remarks that 'there is not a sharp or malignant word in all his writings.'<sup>4</sup> Yet these writings give away his utter lack of comprehension continually. Metcalfe sets down sentiments profoundly liberal, which are immediately followed by

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Lord Stanley, April 24, 1843. Metcalfe would have styled the Ministers 'the office-holders'.

<sup>2</sup>See Morison, *British Supremacy and Canadian Autonomy*, 8.

<sup>3</sup>Gibbon Wakefield, 7.

<sup>4</sup>P. 179.

## CANADA

some phrase that lights up his inner immobility. It was hard that a man who had left England in the last year of the previous century, a full generation before the Reform Bill, should be sent to deal with the fiercely alive antagonisms and hopes and resolution of Canada—after his manhood had passed entirely in India and his mind been formed in that preposterous land. His notion of self-government was one which has never been held outside British India.

‘The man whose errors almost precipitated another rebellion’<sup>1</sup> deplored ‘party government’, and was not going to have it in Canada if he could help it. He had had no experience of English politics, and what he had seen from the outside had shocked him.<sup>2</sup> Their blare and absurdity, their manifest cynicism and rowdy misrepresentation, made a sad contrast with his ideal of a stately gathering of wise, just, essentially moderate men, who in unity and calm discussion settled what was best for the whole commonwealth. In the Calcutta Supreme Council he had worked with Lord William Bentinck, thinker and humanitarian, while Blunt or Fendall sagely concurred or suggested some point that had been overlooked, and the Commander-in-Chief supplied a balance of bluff barking Tory sense. Latterly they had had with them also the brilliant young Mr. Macaulay—perhaps not as attentive as he should have been, since eagerly waiting to exercise his own majestic powers, ‘his seemingly boundless knowledge of life, his acquaintance with history and philosophy, his fiery zeal in argument, and his calm eloquence in oratory’, at every sentence shedding on debate the light of apposite examples culled from the whole range of human and divine existence, and opening to ravished listeners ‘new subjects of thought for future study’.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Macaulay knew everything and could talk illuminatingly on every theme; and Metcalfe himself knew a good deal.

<sup>1</sup>Morison, *British Supremacy and Canadian Self-Government*, 158.

<sup>2</sup>He ‘had come to identify party divisions with factiousness’—Morison, 169.

<sup>3</sup>Colonel Meadows Taylor, *The Story of My Life*, 76. Taylor had the luck to meet Macaulay at Ootacamund, just arrived from home and in the

## CANADA

If you must have Responsible Government, what Government could be more responsible than this had been? It proved, however, a model difficult to transplant from the Hugli's banks to those of the St. Lawrence. 'My own desire would be to rid myself of connexions with any parties exclusively, and to adopt whatever measures may be best, with equal justice to all, with councillors selected from all parties.' But party spirit blocked this excellent purpose.

'This party spirit leads to party conclusions, and renders it difficult, if not impossible, to conciliate all parties. . . . I wish that I could anticipate the day when all would be reconciled, and United Canada be really united in internal harmony and attachment to the British Crown. Such a consummation is, I fear, remote and uncertain.'

Those words lead us into the heart of his worst problem, which broke his spirit in the end; and here, I think, any but a hopelessly hostile reader must admit that the Governor, isolated and uncomprehending though he so often was, deserves our sympathy. The savagery of Canadian politics—'democracy . . . still in its crude and repulsive stage'<sup>1</sup>—was appalling. Bagot had been struck by the low standard of public life, judged by even his extensive experience (which had ranged from St. Petersburg to New York). The air was thick with vituperation—'cool and steady villainy', 'reptile', 'cacodemon' (even Shakespeare being searched for invective)—that stood for real passionate hatred. Mr. Morison justly points out that Canadian politicians even at their best were 'not yet learned sufficiently in the science of Cabinet government, with its compromises and willingness to spare'<sup>2</sup> minorities, to make the prospect of entrusting them with complete power an exhilarating one to the outsider.

The French were disaffected, Metcalfe saw, and their dis-

first fine careless rapture of omniscience and energy. 'Macaulay's conversation I found intensely fascinating. . . . Oh, if I had been among such men always, I thought, I should have been very different!'

<sup>1</sup>Glazebrook, 161.

<sup>2</sup>*Sir Charles Bagot*, 7.



## CANADA

affection the harder to deal with, since without definite aim, unless perhaps 'the ascendancy of the French-Canadian nationality'.<sup>1</sup> They did not wish to join the United States or even to become an independent republic, but they inclined 'to adopt any scheme hostile to the British Government', and strongly resented every attempt 'to anglify them', the process urged on successive Governors-General (to which Lord Stanley found Metcalfe as intractable as Bagot had been). 'The necessity of bringing the French into the Councils', Metcalfe reported, was 'universally acknowledged'. 'I consider it my duty to regard French and English alike.'

But his real troubles came from Reformers and Conservatives, both extremely active and alertly on the war-path. The former wanted either independence or incorporation with the United States, except for a minority willing to concede that the British connection should 'nominally remain, on the footing of the British nation bearing all the expense of the protection of Canada, while the anti-British party should rule the province without regard to the supremacy of the mother country, and practically excluding, depressing, and prescribing all those most attached in principle and in feeling to the British connexion.'<sup>2</sup>

Early vigilant against 'republican encroachments', he saw 'a wide difference between an independent State and a colony. In an independent State all parties must generally desire the welfare of the State. In a colony . . . it may happen that the predominant party is hostile . . . to the mother country, or has ulterior motives inconsistent with her interest.'<sup>3</sup>

\* He found himself obliged to govern with 'the utter exclusion of those on whom the mother country might confidently rely in the hour of need'—the Conservatives, 'the only party with which I sympathise'. They included 'those who formerly were considered as exercising great influence in the Government,

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Lord Stanley, November 23, 1844.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* August 5, 1843.

## CANADA

under the reproachful title of the Family Compact', whose 'exclusive appropriation of power, place and profit' was alleged to have justified the Rebellion. Owners of the settled estates, lawyers, retired officers of the regular forces, people living in and near the few considerable cities, the Family Compact were aristocratic. After the War of 1812, they had consolidated their hold, helped by the conspicuous valour and patriotism their leaders had shown. They possessed most of what graces and outward culture the young nation boasted, and in them 'a certain simplicity of life, for incomes and fortunes were small, was combined with a general air of good breeding'. They regarded democracy as 'the parent of all evil',<sup>1</sup> and inveighed against Responsible Government as 'incompatible' with 'a country where almost universal suffrage prevails, where the great mass of the people are uneducated and where there is but little of that salutary influence, which hereditary rank and great wealth exercise in Great Britain'.<sup>2</sup> Time has completed their discomfiture, and their countrymen to-day speak of them with little esteem. They 'represented merely, within their restricted sphere, those principles of class government and vested interests which were still the dominant political factor in every country of Europe'.<sup>3</sup> To the Reformers they were 'a nest of unclean birds'.<sup>4</sup> They retorted on this critic, that he was a 'reptile' and 'spaniel dog', so honours were fairly divided.

Behind the two chief parties stood the Irish, branded as 'rebels' (and the amnesty brought genuine rebels swarming back from the United States) if Reformers and as 'Tories' and 'Orangemen' if Conservatives. Metcalfe found both species a pest. The Orange Lodges were 'ultra-British on condition that Great Britain continued anti-papal';<sup>5</sup> and Metcalfe briefly styled their proceedings 'mischievous'. He told Lord Stanley:

<sup>1</sup>A. G. Bradley, *The Making of Canada*, 381-382.

<sup>2</sup>Address to Sir Charles Bagot, May 16, 1842.

<sup>3</sup>Leacock, 12-13.

<sup>4</sup>William Lyon MacKenzie, in 1826.

<sup>5</sup>Goldwin Smith, *The Political History of Canada*, 32.

## CANADA

'If a violent Conservative wishes to overawe a public meeting or to carry an election, he collects a party of Orangemen, or Irish Protestants, armed with bludgeons . . . the Orangemen being always on the side of the Conservatives. . . . The Reformers, when they have notice of this, endeavour to bring a large party of Roman Catholics armed in like manner.'

Both kinds, whether they swarmed out of Orange Lodges or Hibernian ones, had only one point of agreement, that elections should be conducted as physical combats, with staves and fists and often firearms. It was wrong, but not altogether strange, that the new Governor-General should have eyed self-government with such distaste.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### FAILURE

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‘There is no more mournful picture in Canadian history than is afforded by the spectacle of this indomitable and conscientious Governor fighting the most bitter opposition and extreme and continuous suffering, in what he deemed to be the cause of the Crown.’—J. Castell Hopkins.

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**T**he new Governor-General toured extensively—as he told the Colonial Secretary, not because he expected it would do any good, but because it seemed to be the custom. The coming storm showed its first gusts in the official addresses. Most of these contained a hearty kick at the political combination most obnoxious to their authors; and most were written in the expansive style which readers of *Martin Chuzzlewit* have sometimes imagined was exaggerated.

‘It was here that the British standard, emblematic of intelligence, civilisation, and above all, of the Christian faith, first floated over the then vast wilderness. . . . It was here that . . . a ruthless invader applied the torch of desolation, and by wantonly burning down every habitation . . . provoked a spirit which soon carried retribution into the enemy’s land. It was here that the victories of Stoney Creek, Lundy’s Lane, and Queenston Heights attested the unswerving loyalty and dauntless bravery of those upon whom, on these trying occasions, devolved the privilege of sustaining British fame. It was here, too, that one of your predecessors gloriously fell . . . and almost within view rises a monument to preserve his memory, and to stimulate those who behold it, to heroism like his . . . shattered as it now is by the sacrilegious hands of nameless ruffians. . . . To the Niagara district, prominent in historical recollections, sublime in the natural scenery it presents, distinguished by the oftentimes proved

## FAILURE

loyalty of its inhabitants, we heartily bid your Excellency welcome.'

It was all very unlike the stately *Minutes*, sentence flanked by cautious sentence, modifying, strengthening, retracting, which had come to typify democratic government for him. He was embarked on a sea which *Minutes* could not quiet.

He wrote pessimistically, both to his sister and to the Colonial Secretary, that these exuberant addresses meant nothing. 'If grand receptions, loyal addresses, banners displayed, and triumphal arches could afford comfort and assurance, I should have them; but I cannot say that they do, for I fear that the whole concern is rotten at the core. Health as usual. Face no better.'<sup>1</sup> In the laconic grimness of those last two sentences we perhaps have the secret of his misery, confronted by a young people whose excess of vitality he could not understand.

He denied the accusations contained in some addresses, while often (as I have noted) unconsciously giving away his blank incomprehension, by a phrase or sentence added. 'No mistake can be greater than to imagine that I am reluctant to seek and receive advice.' Advice, yes. But to grant any *right* to share in the rule of their country, never. 'I found Responsible Government practically acknowledged in this colony, and I have endeavoured to carry it out for the public good. It may, however, be pushed to an extreme.' He refused to surrender 'the prerogative of the Crown . . . for party purposes'.

Yet remember his difficulties. The words I have just quoted were in reply to the mutually contradictory addresses he received at Talbot. One address expressed the deepest dissatisfaction that Canada had been for two years governed, not by Her Majesty's Administration, but by a political party, with disaffected and separatist leaders in high office. 'The system called "Responsible Government" has been introduced, contrary to the enactments of the Union Bill.' This was signed by 816

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. August 27, 1843.

## FAILURE

citizens. But 1,262 citizens signed a paean of gratitude, 'as those who have been taught from their earliest years to admire Britain's unequalled Constitution', for 'its adoption amongst us, as recommended by that profound Statesman Lord Durham'. And probably these figures, against and for Responsible Government, represented very fairly the average division of opinion.

The sick and disillusioned Governor-General could only reply, in sadness and weary listlessness—a contrast with the vigour we remember through his Indian years—that both sides should 'forget and forgive past injuries and offences; and that no recollection should remain of bygone troubles, except the gratitude due to those who stood forth for their Queen and Country in the hour of need'.

This gratitude he himself felt strongly. 'I am still persuaded', he told Lord Stanley, 'that the firmest adherents to British connexion are the main body of the Conservative party.'<sup>1</sup> But he refused to put them over the other parties, or to dismiss Ministers whom he personally regarded as mischievous and whose dismissal the Conservatives demanded. These Ministers had popular support, and were therefore (he held) entitled to places in his Council. He refused to discriminate against those who had lately been in rebellion, though he knew that some still plotted armed revolt. When some who addressed him entered 'our most solemn protest against the appointment of anyone to a Government situation who has taken up arms against that Government, or instigated others to do so', he replied that the tone of their communication filled him with regret, with its 'injurious accusations and reflections'. 'It is surely desirable that all parties should labor together in peace and harmony for the welfare of the community.'

The Conservatives were by no means the only vindictive group. The Reformers were as bad. 'I am an advocate', wrote Metcalfe, 'for entire forgetfulness of past offences against the State. But it is provoking to find that those who claim amnesty

<sup>1</sup>April 25, 1843.

## FAILURE

for rebels and brigands, with whom to a certain extent they sympathised, are inveterate in their hostility to those who were faithful to their Sovereign and country. The amnesty ought, at least, to be reciprocal.<sup>1</sup>

An immense relief breathes in his response to the appeal of the St. Clair Red Indians. 'Father', they assured him, 'We much love our great Mother the Queen. . . . We know our great Mother the Queen loves her red children. . . . We believe you will wish us well, as you Our Father have the knowledge of the Queen's will.

'Father, We have heard that the Affairs of the Indians have seriously occupied the attention of the great men of this Country and this has been to us good news. We are poor and have often thought an examination of our condition might lead our great White Chief to devise means to help us and shew us how to help ourselves.

'Father, You will be glad to hear that the Indians on this Reservation have given up their habits and superstitious practices, and have embraced the good religion of Jesus Christ. It has done us much good, and we are thankful that ever the great English Wesleyan Missionary Society sent us a Minister of the Gospel. We love that Body of Christians very much and have no desire to change our form of religion.

'Father, We and our people are very anxious to improve and make progress in useful knowledge, and we would be happy to see all the Indians near us prosperous and happy. But we cannot refrain from fearing that some of our poor brothers near us will not give over drunkenness and wickedness, so long as they have the bad example and advice of one who has also done much injury to many of our brothers on this reservation. Our hearts are very heavy when we think on those miseries and troubles. . . .

'Father, that you may know that these are our words we have each made our totam (mark).'

<sup>1</sup>To Lord Stanley, May 12, 1843.

## FAILURE

After the names, Indian and translated into English, are drawn birds and fishes.

Metcalf answered, 'I have received with great pleasure, my children, the paper which you have sent.' They were quite right to be grateful to the missionaries (whose assistance may perhaps fairly be surmised in the composition of the address) of 'the Wesleyan Society whose exemplary devotion to the help of their benighted Brethren in all parts of the World deserves the highest praise'.

The Ojibways' Address deserves quotation also. They saw in Metcalf the representative of 'our beloved mother, whose strong arm reaches across the vast salt waters to support our weakness, to clothe the naked, and feed the hungry of our now scattered and enfeebled race'. But for her, 'the Red men, the first and once the sole possessors of the soil, would live but in fable. The memory of the exploits of their ancestors and the traditions of old men would alone recall their existence and destruction.'

'Great Father! We are feebly attempting to walk in the footsteps of your people. We see them increase whilst we wither and perish like the autumn leaf. But we also will cease to be hunters, and seek in the bosom of the earth that food for our wives and children for which we vainly toil in our rapidly disappearing forests.'

They besought the Governor-General not to listen to those who said, 'The Red men's lands are wastes in the midst of cultivation, they are slothful and unworthy of support.'

'The young bird flutters round the nest in which he has been reared before he ventures to open his wings to the wind; his flight is slow and heavy until success induces him to venture boldly into the air. So it is with us. And may we be like that young bird!'

They asked if it were true that his predecessor, 'our dear friend', was dying.

Metcalf expressed approval of their desire to lead a more



## FAILURE

settled life. 'It will be a most gratifying part of my study to attend to your laudable desire for literary and religious instruction, by which your happiness in both worlds will be most surely promoted.' I am afraid we must admit that his literary touch had become as heavy as his heart!

'Your fears for the life of your father and friend, the late Governor, are, alas! too well founded, and you may soon have to deplore his removal from this world.<sup>1</sup> But you will derive consolation from the assurance that the souls of the good in the hour of death exchange the uncertainties of mortal existence for eternal bliss at the throne of the Almighty through the merits and mediation of the Saviour and Redeemer of sinful mankind. So, by Divine Mercy, it will be with the departing spirit of your late father; and so may it be with you when, in the appointed time, your earthly career may be ended. God bless you all.'

In this miserable summer of 1843 the Wesleyans, to whose work he had paid a merited tribute, were among those who added to his unhappiness by their internecine quarrels. He felt it the more, because the Government held itself particularly indebted to them. 'I believe that it has been generally acknowledged that the elections in 1836 were carried against the Reformers by their votes.'<sup>2</sup>

He was up against men far younger, tenacious of their right in the country, determined to control its destinies. In Kaye's pages they are a cloud of dusky Ethiops battling against the solitary knight of righteousness. But Kaye's own mind, as any mind familiar with British-Indian politics and trying to readjust its ideas to those of the infinitely dissimilar Canadian scene must be, is confused. For example, of Morin, Metcalfe's Commissioner of Crown Lands, he writes, with a cynicism I should be sorry to emulate:

<sup>1</sup>Bagot's body, accompanied by his family, presently passed through American territory to New York, amid 'marked and affecting tokens of friendly respect . . . a generous sympathy worthy of the great nation by which it was evinced' (Metcalfé).

<sup>2</sup>Sir Francis Hincks, *Reminiscences of His Public Life*, 17.

## FAILURE

‘With administrative abilities of the highest class, vast powers of application, and an extreme love of order, he united a rare conscientiousness and a noble self-devotion, which in old times would have carried him cheerfully to the stake. His patriotism was of the purest water. He was utterly without selfishness and guile. And he was of so sensitive a nature, and so confiding a disposition, that it was said of him, he was as tender-hearted as a woman and as simple as a child. But for these—the infirmities only of noble minds—he might have been a great statesman.’<sup>1</sup> That opens up a dreary vista of the qualities which great statesmen require.

Like the two unknown soldiers buried by Concord Bridge, Metcalfe had come across the sea ‘to keep the Past upon its Throne’. Canadian opinion reveres his enemies as founders of the Dominion’s nationality. But some judgments of both friends and opponents must be set down, without comment, in order that we may be enabled to see them in a contemporary light, as they appeared to Metcalfe.

The Reformers had gained the ascendant, largely by the support of Louis-Hippolyte La Fontaine—a Frenchman, but one who had refused to countenance the Rebellion—‘a large portly gentleman, familiar with the English language, but speaking it with a foreign accent’.<sup>2</sup> He so resembled Napoleon in appearance that (we are told) the latter’s veterans flocked to see him when he visited Paris. To Lord Sydenham he was ‘that scoundrel La Fontaine’; a more judicial hostile witness wrote: ‘Mr. Lafontaine’s closest friends admit that his temper is suspicious, haughty and overbearing, while even his foes give him credit for patriotism and honesty.’<sup>3</sup> Of the Reformers’ leaders, Hincks, already mentioned as a first-rate financier, was more essentially conservative than even Baldwin, and in later years himself served as a Governor of dependencies, became a baronet, and left *Reminiscences* written in a style that would add aridity to the Sahara. Baldwin, to Lord Sydenham at first ‘the best lawyer in the Province and a

<sup>1</sup>Kaye, ii, 487-488.

<sup>2</sup>*Life of Baldwin*, 133.

<sup>3</sup>Gibbon Wakefield, 29.

## FAILURE

man of the highest character',<sup>1</sup> fifteen months later had become 'the most crotchety impracticable enthusiast I ever had to deal with'. 'I have got rid of Baldwin and finished him as a public man for ever . . . he had a reputation (a most undeserved one) for honesty.'<sup>2</sup> Lord Sydenham's exasperation led him to a conclusion with which no one has agreed. Baldwin's 'integrity has never been doubted';<sup>3</sup> his 'whole political life . . . was a vigil with an uncompromising conscience'.<sup>4</sup> Apparently, however, with integrity went those minor defects that so often accompany it. He was a 'doctrinaire',<sup>5</sup> 'as remarkable for blind self-esteem in public as for respectability of character in private';<sup>6</sup> 'an air of austere virtue . . . prevented his ever inspiring enthusiasm.'<sup>7</sup>

These antagonists took the Governor-General's measure early. He 'evidently was not prepared for what he finds, whether as respects country, men or parties', observed Baldwin, May 16, 1843. 'He has evidently something to unlearn.' Part of this superfluous knowledge was tolerance, his lifelong habit; Metcalfe was told all Orangemen in public service must be dismissed, and tests imposed on the state's servants. The demand for the fullest surrender of self-government was pressed upon him; 'his uncritical childlike loyalty to the Empire and the Queen'<sup>8</sup> saw in it the most unscrupulous treason.

As in Jamaica (when his criticism of the Baptist missionaries was published), so now, when tactful silence was called for, the Home Government blazed abroad his troubles. His physical wretchedness made him exceptionally dependent on personal kindness, and Captain Higginson, his private secretary—whom Canada nicknamed 'the everlasting Secretary'—was alleged to be the real Governor. Higginson had with La Fontaine what the latter said was represented as a friendly unofficial talk about

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Lord John Russell, February 13, 1840: quoted in Paul Knaplund, *Letters from Lord Sydenham to Lord John Russell*, 48.

<sup>2</sup>Letters to Lord John Russell, June 12 and 27, 1841: *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>Hopkins, 289.

<sup>4</sup>Chester Martin, 257.

<sup>5</sup>F. Bradshaw, *Self-Government in Canada*, 122.

<sup>6</sup>Gibbon Wakefield, 29.

<sup>7</sup>Bradshaw, 122.

<sup>8</sup>W. P. Morrell, 63.

## FAILURE

the trend of opinion. La Fontaine made his position plain: 'to strengthen us we must have the entire confidence of the Governor-General exhibited most unequivocally—and also his patronage—to be bestowed exclusively on our political adherents. We feel that His Excellency has kept aloof from us. The opposition pronounce that his sentiments are with them.'

This interview Higginson reported to Metcalfe, which it seems to me should have been expected. Metcalfe in his acute suffering and mental confusion sent on to Lord Stanley an account concerning whose accuracy the Canadian statesman was never consulted, an action resented at the time and resented ever since. Lord Stanley read out in a debate passages from the letter—miserable hopeless sentences, in which the Governor-General declared indignantly:<sup>1</sup>

'I learn that my attempts to conciliate all parties are criminal in the eyes of the Council, or at least of the most formidable member of it. I am required to give myself up entirely to the Council; to submit absolutely to their dictation; to have no judgment of my own; to bestow the patronage of the Government exclusively on their partisans; to proscribe their opponents; and to make some public and unequivocal declaration of my adhesion to those conditions.'

The question at issue was whether the Governor-General 'shall, or shall not, have a voice in his own Council; whether he shall be at liberty to treat all her Majesty's subjects with equal justice, or be a reluctant and passive tool in the hands of a party for the purpose of proscribing their opponents—those opponents being the portion of the community most attached to British connexion; and the Governor required to proscribe them being a British Governor. The tendency and object of this movement is to throw off the Government of the mother country in internal affairs entirely—but to be maintained and supported at her expense, and to have all the advantages of connexion, as long as it may suit the majority of the people of Canada to endure it. This is a very intelligible and very con-

<sup>1</sup>Letter, May 12, 1843.

## FAILURE

venient policy for a Canadian aiming at independence, but the part that the representative of the mother country is required to perform is by no means fascinating'.

England, as he saw things, had poured out blood and treasure on ungrateful children, not for the first time. Or, as a Canadian historian has put it, successive Tory Governments had administered the Empire 'with financial generosity and constitutional parsimony'.<sup>1</sup>

Metcalf wrote despairing terrible letters:

'I have consented to undertake an almost hopeless task, and must go on with it until I either succeed or decidedly fail. . . . My Face is no better than it was at Deer Park. Dr. O'Shaughnessy has returned to his wife & Family, fancying that he has done good. All the Doctors I observe congratulate themselves on their own performances; but in truth the disease baffles them all, and continues its course, rather aggravated than mended by their applications.'<sup>2</sup>

His teeth on the same side of his face being now affected, Metcalfe could not sleep for anguish. Letter after letter repeats the same story, so that they are a misery to read.

The conviction grows that the man who had been deliberately and frequently passed over for Indian Governments (where certainly his alleged Toryism could not have been considered a disqualification) had been sent to Canada because the job was so thankless that no one of any influence wanted it. He faced two sets of issues, constitutional and local; and 'the local issues connected themselves with petty jobs and rather nauseous corruption'.<sup>3</sup> Metcalfe, who had refused to contest an English constituency because bribery and canvassing struck him as inconsistent with self-respect—who all his life had stood above the wish (or need) for money—could see only too well that some of the patriots assailing him were mainly concerned with their own

<sup>1</sup>J. L. Morison, *British Supremacy and Canadian Autonomy*, 10.

<sup>2</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. June, 1843. See also letters of July 30 and October 11.

<sup>3</sup>J. L. Morison, *Sir Charles Bagot*, 6.

## FAILURE

interests. What he was incapable of seeing was that parliamentary government inevitably meant party government, and that party government meant that the dominant group would put their own supporters in office wherever they could.

Inevitably, to a man who had spent his life in India, patronage was all important. His correspondence had been incessantly about the chances of getting a billet here for this promising young gentleman, of helping that rather more senior person to affluence there. Patronage was the spring and framework of government, it *was* government, and surrendering it you surrendered all.

'I wish to make the patronage of the Government conducive to the conciliation of all parties, by bringing into the public service the men of greatest merit and efficiency, without any party distinction.'

To give up patronage 'would have shackled the Governor and dragged him' at his Council's 'chariot-wheels'.<sup>1</sup> So, 'The wars of the ins and outs will continue to rage. . . . My determination is to do what seems to be right and practicable, and to take the consequences—but hope I have none, not even of escape.'<sup>2</sup>

He was brought to bay when his Assembly met, September 28, 1843. Throughout October and November the Executive Council treated him with open insolence, and as far as possible left him out of their proceedings. The break came, November 26, when Baldwin, Hincks and La Fontaine resigned, and all but one of the Council (Daly, a peaceable creature, somewhat acrimoniously styled 'the Permanent Secretary' and 'the Vicar of Bray') resigned with them. Metcalfe reported to Lord Stanley that his opponents' 'exclusive views . . . were almost literally confined to the possession of patronage for party purposes . . . the sole object of their cupidity'. He himself (he quietly observes) from his first arrival had taken patronage back into his own hands, 'without reference to the Council, except in cases in which the law required that I should have their consent, or in which I

<sup>1</sup>December 26, 1843.

<sup>2</sup>July 15, 1843.

## FAILURE

was desirous to avail myself of their advice'. On the other hand, 'I scarcely ever heard of a vacancy except by a nomination from them for the succession. . . . I rarely made an appointment otherwise than on their recommendation. . . . I do not recollect a single instance in which I made an appointment without being previously made acquainted with their sentiments regarding it. . . . Were I now endeavouring to account to your Lordship for any exercise of patronage, I should be much more fearful of being found guilty of too much consideration for the Council, than of too rigid a maintenance of the prerogative of the Crown.'

He had appointed a French-Canadian officer to his personal staff, without consulting La Fontaine, who disliked the officer. Behind this comparatively small matter loomed (Metcalfé thought) a larger one. There were Bills before the Assembly, which would create new appointments with considerable salaries. Some of these posts, it was rumoured, had been given away in advance, to buy support. At any rate, the Ministers had demanded his surrender of the power of appointment; and since their resignation (Metcalfé said) in their attacks they had fastened on patronage solely, and 'not one word has been said of the numerous daily, and often important, orders issued by me without reference to them'. He did not believe that they were much troubled about Responsible Government, therefore. They were trying 'to force themselves back on me by the weight of their majority'; or, failing in that, to make any other Administration impossible, and to obstruct 'the progress of beneficial measures'.<sup>1</sup>

It was all pikestaff plain to him, and terrible in its naked wickedness. The opposition meant to make him 'merely an instrument for putting the sign-manual to their dictations'. He regarded 'their faint profession of a desire to perpetuate the connexion . . . with the Mother Country as utterly worthless; although I do not imagine that generally they have separation as their immediate object, their present views being to establish the power

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Lord Stanley, December 26, 1843.

## FAILURE

of their party, and to be sustained at the expense of the British nation, but with perfect independence of its supremacy. . . . Whether my contest be with a malignant minority, or with a majority of the House of Assembly, or with the whole colony run mad, my duty must be the same. I cannot surrender Her Majesty's authority, or the supremacy of the Mother Country.<sup>1</sup> 'The whole colony', he wrote, a year later,<sup>2</sup> 'must at times be regarded as a party opposed to Her Majesty's Government.'

It was all very like India in recent years; and he was incurably the Indian Governor, whose experience, no less than his ideas, have unfitted him to deal with independent men and women. Metcalfe's whole life had been an exercise of paternal despotism, and, accustomed to doing all things himself, he could not grasp the fact that Canadians considered themselves colleagues and not subjects. It was 'a common saying' that the Governor-General worked 'like a slave. His work, however, differs from that of the slave inasmuch as he seems to take great pleasure in it. I have never known any body in public or private life, who appeared so to love labor for its own sake . . . he is unceasingly at work except when eating or asleep.'<sup>3</sup>

His insistence on seeing to everything himself, his opponents complained, obstructed business. And their gross discourtesy in reply—as he said, they themselves, while charging him with neglect of them, deliberately ignored him and left him out of all consultations—may be allowed to have had this justification.

Yet the ethical right seems to have been on his side when he was attacked for having reserved for the Home Government's consideration a Bill to suppress Secret Societies. Admitting the offence, he told his Council 'that it was an arbitrary and unwise measure, and not even calculated to effect the object it had in view'. He had allowed the Bill to be introduced; but merely for the sake of peace:

'The gentlemen of the late Council cannot fail to remember

<sup>1</sup>Letter to the same, March 30, 1844.

<sup>2</sup>May 13, 1845.

<sup>3</sup>Gibbon Wakefield, 5-6.



## FAILURE

with what pertinacity those measures<sup>1</sup> were pressed on him, and can hardly be unaware of what would have followed at that time, if, in addition to rejecting the proscriptive measures urged on him, he had also refused to permit any legislation on the subject.'

He had let his Ministers go, 'without any effort to detain them, for there was only one among them, Mr. Morin, whom I could have any desire to retain, or whose continuance would have been of any service to the Government'. He had no intention of submitting 'to such dictation from the "*Civium ardor prava jubentium*"', whose success could only lead to the annihilation of the power of the Crown and eventual separation or civil war ('although', he adds, with a tired casualness, 'it is likewise possible that resistance may lead to the same result').<sup>2</sup>

No one has ever written of Metcalfe without quoting Gibbon Wakefield's 'Sir Charles Metcalfe, whom God made greater than the Colonial Office'. I had hoped to make a breach with tradition; I am not clear what the remark means, or can mean. But it was true of the year of heavy folly when Peel and Stanley wasted correspondence on the notion of establishing colonial orders of knighthood. 'Never did Great Britain more thoroughly deserve to lose Canada than in 1844.'<sup>3</sup> Metcalfe's blindness at least had nobility in it. In the Home Government's attitude there was nothing but a desperate wonder if Canadians could be beguiled by ribbons of some inferior kind or other.

I have said that he was incurably the Indian Governor. How much so, he showed now, by words remembered and resented in Canada ever since. Anglo-Indian opinion had gathered to his support; and writing to friends of East India Company service Metcalfe used illustrations that seemed to him and them wonderfully apposite. They could not guess that what he and they considered ludicrous would one day come to be conceivable.

<sup>1</sup>Executive measures against rebels or people thought to be disloyal.

<sup>2</sup>Letter to Lord Stanley, December 26, 1843.

<sup>3</sup>Morrell, 63.

## FAILURE

'Fancy such a state of things in India, with a Mahomedan Council and a Mahomedan Assembly,<sup>1</sup> and you will have some notion of my position. On a distinct demand from the Council for stipulations which would have reduced me to a nonentity, I refused. They instantly resigned, and were supported by the House of Assembly. Since then I have not even been able to form a Council likely to carry a majority, such is the dread of the power of the party who thought by their resignation to drive me to receive them back. . . . I cannot . . . surrender the Queen's Government into the hands of rebels, and become myself their ignominious tool. I know not what the end will be. The only thing certain is that I cannot yield.'

Mountstuart Elphinstone, from comfortable retirement in Scotland, wrote, 'If I had the energy and ability to fill such a place as yours, I would not give the few months of your approaching crisis for a hundred years of unprofitable enjoyment.' Brave words! that cost the writer nothing. He had refused to leave his own philosophic ease, to take up the Governor-Generalship of India.

Yet it is characteristic of Metcalfe's sense of fairness that he refused to save himself in an obvious manner. The Conservatives throughout excited Canada rose to his action with delight. He was congratulated for his 'firm avowal . . . *that you will never be the traitor to sign the death-warrant of British connexion*'. 'On the resignation of my dictatorial Cabinet' (he had insensibly slipped into giving them this name) 'the Conservative party came forward manfully and generously to my support; and if I could have thrown myself entirely into their arms, that support would have been complete and enthusiastic.' He preferred to fight for his concept that he was Governor of all the people, not of the race and party which he thought in the right. By his fairness he saved Canada to the Empire. He wrote of his enemies with a generosity that never falters into any word that could arouse resentment in those who read his despatches to-day; and

<sup>1</sup>The Muhammadans represented Indian nationalist feeling, as it then existed. No one supposed that the mild Hindu would ever develop such feeling.

## FAILURE

reported events to his superiors in England, with a moderation and decency that win admiration, even while we see how utterly he mistook the age.

He fought back, maintaining that he had scrupulously observed Responsible Government. While Canada rang with abuse that was to follow him to his grave, he set himself to find new Councillors, or, if necessary, to govern with none. Two men—Viger, a French-Canadian who had been in sympathy with the rebels, though not to the extent of joining them, and had been vetoed by the Colonial Office as a Member of Council; and Draper, a supporter of Responsible Government but a loyalist—consented to be sworn but declined to accept any portfolio or payment. Metcalfe covered himself with derision, governing with such a Council. He approached the French, who merely played with him.

Meanwhile, Metcalfe was dying. External treatment had been practically abandoned, and he was being dosed internally with 'a mixture of Arsenic Iodine & Mercury, which my Stomach nauseates so as to make it difficult to put it to my lips'. It was winter. 'Rivers & Lake frozen, and not a Vestige of Earth or Water to be seen from Snow & Frost. . . . At Quebec it is said to have been 40 below Zero.' True to his training, he slept still in a room without fire or stove, and bathed in cold water and wore 'the same Cloathing as in England'.<sup>1</sup>

Metcalfe's struggle with his Councillors has, naturally, so taken up historians' attention, that it would be easy to imagine that his government was remarkable for nothing else. This is unjust. His own liberality, as always, was boundless, and has left a glowing heart of kindly memory amid the cloud of detraction that has followed his name. He cared for Canada's material prosperity, rejoicing in its magnificent resources, attending closely to addresses which told him frankly, at the outset of his administration, how these were handicapped:

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. January 27, 1844.

## FAILURE

'We have no market. The Americans shut us out of their markets, and are then suffered to come and force us from our own. . . . Our municipal institutions are inefficient. Our school laws are of no benefit. The administration of justice is not what it should be. . . . Nothing but a strong, impartial, and honest Government . . . a Government such as we believe your Excellency has both the ability and the disposition to administer, can save our country from anarchy and confusion.'

Such a Government he set himself to give Canada, according to his lights. He supported Montreal's claim to be made a free port (like Toronto and Hamilton), pointing out that many sea-going vessels came up to the city without unloading at Quebec. Lord Stanley refused. The Cabinet's policy was to establish in British North America free river ports close to the sea, not allowing foreign ships to go beyond them for the purpose of inland trading. They could not object to the passage of U.S.A. vessels from American towns along the great waterway, however far inland. But they would not make Montreal a port open to the unrestricted trade of American seaports and of the rest of the world.<sup>1</sup>

Metcalf consistently pressed Montreal's importance and right to fullest recognition. The Union, he wrote, had been 'effected without the consent of Lower Canada, and with the hesitating but purchased assent of Upper Canada. The Upper Canadians were induced to agree . . . by the advantage of putting a share of the burden of their debt and expenditure on Lower Canada, by the hope of aid from the mother country for the advancement of public works, and by a persuasion . . . that the seat of the Government of the United Province should be fixed in Upper Canada.' As a halfway performance of this implied promise, Government had been at Kingston for two years now. He concurred in his Council's desire to make Montreal the capital; that city had connections with both Provinces. 'It is not only the principal place in population, wealth and commerce, but is also the only place where the English and French races can amalgamate. Kingston is a foreign land to the

<sup>1</sup>*Colonial Records, Canada*: September, 1843.

## FAILURE

French-Canadians. . . . Place the capital in Upper Canada, and the Lower Canadians will be dissatisfied. Place it in Lower Canada, and the Upper Canadians will be so. In proposing Montreal, therefore, I do not mean to promise that such a decision will not produce great dissatisfaction in Upper Canada, for I am inclined to believe that it will, and I have been told that it will lead to a motion for the repeal of the Union', but, everything considered, it was the best and wisest thing to do.<sup>1</sup> This was done, and Montreal entered on a brief tenure of Metropolitan glory, Metcalfe removing thither in June, 1844.

Canada's system of canals and interlinked waterways was responsible for nearly all the public debt—which rose, from about £1,080,000 sterling (June 27, 1840), to £1,226,000 sterling or £1,325,000 Canadian sterling (February 22, 1841). Undismayed, Metcalfe said he wished that Indian budgets had as much to show for expenditure. He fought the demand that the American banking system should be adopted, and pointed to the epidemic of failures in the richer country, where 'mercantile affairs . . . have fallen into the most deplorable disorder'. The United States country banks were associations of people who wanted to borrow among themselves; they had no bona-fide capital. Having more interest in the multiplication of notes than in security, the vast majority of the community became debtors. 'By the over-issue of notes in the way of discount' and by engagement in wild speculations almost everyone was 'interested in the increase of the evil'; legislatures and people 'joined together in the evasion of every regulation which made a shew of offering security for Banking transactions'. The bank notes were theoretically payable in specie, but the banks 'kept literally no specie on hand', and 'he who presented' a note for such payment 'was considered as guilty of an immorality—he was refused accommodation and became unable to carry on business'. In Canada specie circulated freely. Metcalfe said of Mr. Merritt, the protagonist of 'the American system of expansion': 'the only use

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Lord Stanley, April, 1843.

## FAILURE

of Banks, in his opinion, is to keep a large quantity of paper afloat', which was why he wanted more banks, an abundance of irredeemable paper money, an unlimited public debt, and (to Metcalfe now, as in his Indian Council days, the crime of crimes) payment of interest out of principal.

In 1843, Toronto's coloured inhabitants—a large community, who had played a zealous part in repelling parties of Liberators from the United States—were aggrieved by the extradition of a negro on a charge of forgery. Such charges, they said, were only excuses pretended in order to recover possession of escaped slaves. Slaves could not be accused of forgery, 'as by the Constitution and Laws of the United States, Slaves are not recognised as persons, any more than any other Animal'. Metcalfe reassured them. He had no intention of returning fugitives to bondage.<sup>1</sup>

In this same summer, the Iroquois also needed reassurance. The Maine Boundary dispute was at its height, and they were 'alarmed for their village, church and Farms, which they hold under the solemn guarantee of the British Government'.<sup>2</sup>

Metcalfe bestirred himself to save something of the Western seaboard before too late. The people along the Mississippi were planning to take forcible possession of the Oregon territory. David Thompson, whose geographical achievements have never been excelled (unless by Livingstone), now in extreme old age and poverty asked in return for his maps and services £200 down and a pension of £250, with £100 annually to his widow afterwards. He sent his carefully made map of the West, the result of 'twenty-eight years of the prime of my life', years in which he had met no man in a civilised state, except at an occasional trading post. 'My Sextant and my arms were seldom out of my hands, and I spared no expense.' He saw Metcalfe, and moved his deepest interest. Thompson may not have

*told of the magnolia, spread  
High as a cloud, high overhead,*

<sup>1</sup>May, 1843.

<sup>2</sup>July 19, 1843.

## FAILURE

but he told of equal marvels. 'I have measured pines of 42 and 48 feet girth at 10 feet above the root—clean growth, and full 200 feet without a branch, and then a fine head. The largest oak I saw was only 18 feet girth. . . . The raspberry I measured 18 to 21 feet in height; its berries were large, but not in proportion, and had not the fine acid of humbler growth.' There were five species of salmon, which entered different tributaries of the Columbia River to spawn. Thompson analysed and foretold the probable demands of the United States. 'Her Majesty's Ministers ought to insist on' a line from the 49th to the 47th parallel, 'and for once, in the course of 60 years, secure to Great Britain her Dominions from the hitherto successful policy of the United States'.<sup>1</sup>

Metcalfé exerted himself to obtain pardons for French-Canadian rebels sent to New South Wales, and contributed generously to the cost of their repatriation. In May, 1843, he supported a Kingston petition for reward of an officer of the regular army who had shown zeal and skill in the city's defence during the Rebellion; and supported equally a petition sent to England for the free pardon of John B. Tyrell, who had joined 'a party of American brigands in an invasion of Upper Canada . . . in the cause of Liberty and Independence'. Tyrell had been captured and sentenced to death, reprieved and transported. His pardon was granted.

Metcalfé saw to the treaty presents for Indian chiefs: cloths and shawls, 6,322 butchers' knives, 6,785 pounds of tobacco, rations of gunpowder and shot, 80 guns for Chiefs, 49 rifles, 15 brass kettles, 12 tin kettles. In July, 1843, McGill and its Charter, due for revision, exercised his patient and sympathetic care. In October, the Presbyterians asked him to pass on to the Queen their delight at the birth of another princess. If the 'old Indian despot' sinned by imagining that he was expected to practise a paternal system in Canada also, the error was not without excuse.

<sup>1</sup>Thompson, letters of July 21 and 25, 1843.

## FAILURE

For seven months he governed without Executive Council, other than the strictly limited countenance afforded by Messrs. Viger and Draper. Kaye applauds his resolution 'not to abandon the great game'<sup>1</sup> until definitely and irretrievably beaten. Metcalfe, confused and ill informed, approached first this group and then that one, as helpless as the central figure in blind man's buff. No one particularly wanted employment as Executive Councillor. Salaries were trivial, compared with the princely emoluments of Council service in India—in Canada an average of about £1,000 a year. The cash value was not worth the obloquy involved. Metcalfe offered the Attorney-Generalship of Lower Canada to 'six gentlemen—four French and two English', who all 'perseveringly declined' the honour. A seventh took it, and thereby added to the gaiety and exasperation of the Colony. On August 27, 1844, Metcalfe reported to Lord Stanley that he 'expected, in a few days, to be able to announce the completion of' his Executive Council. This Kaye styles being 'crowned with success'.

As a matter of fact, he had, in one way and another and from one source and another, managed to collect a second-rate but respectable body of men. In doing so, he had to suppress his own prejudices. The Commissioner of Crown Lands was D. B. Papineau, whose brother had led the Rebellion in Lower Canada. He was deaf but good-hearted, and he and Viger, President of the Council, brought along a certain amount of French support. The Attorney-General for Lower Canada, a gentleman with the distinctive name of Smith, in this case almost symbolical, represented Everyman when reasonably diligent. The Governor-General, looking his gift-horse carefully in the mouth, announced that on the whole he felt satisfied. The Attorney-Generalship, he remarked, had taken a long while to come to Mr. Smith, but that was all right, for he was 'a sensible and moderate man of right principles; and although he had not previously occupied a seat in the Legislature, there was little doubt that his forensic habits

<sup>1</sup>*Life of Metcalfe*, ii, 555.



## FAILURE

would qualify him for Parliamentary debate'.<sup>1</sup> Still waters are believed to run deep. So the Governor-General took what he could get, and was thankful that this included men as worthy, if unexciting, as Daly, 'the Permanent Secretary', Draper and Morris, 'one of the most respected and respectable men in the province'.

This remarkable Government now confronted a question that has often troubled Governments. Did they dare to appeal to the suffrages of the public whom they represented? After anxious discussion, Metcalfe decided to dissolve his Parliament and order new elections. These were held amid mad excitement, the Government posting troops in expectation of civil war, and the Irish lending the assistance of bodies of navvies armed with bludgeons. Metcalfe felt that he was facing such another issue as the one that had lost the Thirteen Colonies, and he was not far wrong. That he himself was repeating the errors of that time did not occur to him.

All through the year mortal sickness strengthened its grip. 'My Face is worse & worse.' External and internal remedies were useless. 'My Cheek is still uncured . . . although I have not been without incessant applications of Chloride of Zinc for the last three months.' Yet a flicker of hope persisted, in 'the skill & judgment of Mr. Pollock, who seems to understand his business & to be entitled to confidence'.<sup>2</sup> The country was about to secede, 'by the perverseness of its Politicians'. 'How much happier I should have been had we been . . . together! I cannot say that I have enjoyed Happiness since I parted from you; and I certainly have not had one moment of Comfort since I entered Canada.'

'My Duty appears to me to be so clear that I have no reason to hesitate in the course that I am pursuing, although I cannot foresee the termination of the present difficulties. My Face is neither better nor worse. Internal remedies have been for the present discontinued, their uselessness being manifested. External applications are also deemed hopeless and are therefore let

<sup>1</sup>Kaye, *Life of Metcalfe*, ii, 561.

<sup>2</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. February, 1844.

## FAILURE

alone. The Cheek is kept covered with any plaister that seems to be least injurious and for the rest is left much to Nature.<sup>1</sup>

In April arrived a surgeon sent by the Home Government; he 'has had practice in the use of Chloride of Zinc in which he has great confidence. . . . I shall not mind the pain if the operation be efficacious. . . . He is pleasing in looks and manner and address, and inspires some confidence from his apparent good sense and the trustfulness with which he talks of the probability of success. My public prospects do not improve. . . . I have to deal with unprincipled disaffected Men, who succeed in imposing on others by misrepresentations and falsehoods.'<sup>2</sup>

'Had I known the people that I have to deal with before I came, my conscience would have been perfectly satisfied in declining to come.' But 'a sense of Duty and consciousness of a right cause sustain me. . . . I can neither surrender my Trust to them, which is what they are hoping to wrest from me; neither can I desert my Post while it is beset with difficulties'.<sup>3</sup> In June came a little respite. 'I see considerable signs of improvement which give hope as to the result, although some of the worst symptoms still continue—Distention of the Mouth is one, and Mr. Pollock himself is not confident that it will ever come straight again. It is hard to say whether this evil is owing to the disease or to the remedy'.<sup>4</sup> On June 26, he reported that Mr. Pollock 'continues sanguine of success. As repeated applications of the Chloride of Zinc are still necessary, pain inflammation and uneasiness, on the right side of the Face throughout, are kept up in an unabated degree'.<sup>5</sup> He was moving to Montreal, so had taken the opportunity, while his house and baggage were in disorder, to run up Lake Ontario in a steamer, and had looked at Niagara Falls. 'My face is rather better' (August 12), but 'I have rather lost than gained confidence, the Zinc having been inefficacious. . . . I have had a respite from it for three or four weeks, but have not yet done with it'.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. March 26.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* June 12.

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<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* April 26.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.* June 26.

401

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.* May 28.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.* August 12.

L.M.

## FAILURE

Such torture, and such an unconquerable front to it, softened people's hearts—some people's, that is—and seemed to wring a momentary pity from his unfriendly stars. Metcalfe won his election, and on November 23, 1844, reported to Lord Stanley that in Upper Canada 30 Government supporters had been returned, as against 7 opponents and 5 doubtful; and in Lower Canada, 16 supporters, as against 21 opponents and 4 doubtful. This gave him, in both Provinces together, 46 supporters, and 28 opponents and 9 waverers. He analysed the election results with some exasperation.<sup>1</sup> 'Disaffection' was 'predominant among the French-Canadian constituencies'. The French-Canadians had been described to him 'as a quiet, orderly, amiable race, who, if left to themselves, would be peaceable and good subjects. But it is observable that they are more easily led against than for the British Government . . . no misrepresentation and falsehood is too gross for their credence if directed against her Majesty's Government or its supporters.' Wolfried Nelson,<sup>2</sup> a leader of the Rebellion, had defeated Viger. Upper Canada had experienced a recent influx of Irish Catholics, many of them from the United States; their feelings, already anti-British, had been 'diabolically worked on' by people who represented Metcalfe's supporters as Orangemen, thereby 'adding religious animosity to other evils of dissension'. 'Mr. Hincks, one of the late Council, has been particularly conspicuous in this abominable incendiarism.' Mr. Hincks, the Governor-General observed with satisfaction, had lost his seat.

To counterbalance the Irish Catholics, Metcalfe received the support of the Wesleyan Methodists, led by the Rev. Egerton Ryerson, an inveterate and eager politician, conspicuous even in the flock of stormy petrels that flit through these wild years. Ryerson admitted that nine-tenths of the people were opposed

<sup>1</sup>Letter to Lord Stanley, November 23, 1844.

<sup>2</sup>'A Frenchified Englishman': John MacMullen, *The History of Canada*, 415.

## FAILURE

to Metcalfe. Plunging deeply into the battle, his followers temporarily drove these nine-tenths back.<sup>1</sup>

Hincks had been defeated. Baldwin and his group had survived, with losses and after hard fighting. Metcalfe on the whole felt entitled to exult; the good cause had conquered, Upper Canada had been staunch. 'It has often been said that the people of Upper Canada would not be appealed to in vain when the connexion of the province with the mother country might be in jeopardy, and the present crisis had been viewed as one of that character.'

To offset Quebec, where 'the British party appear to have been paralysed', not daring to dispute the elections, Montreal had been miraculously won—'the British party triumphed'—after battle rather than ballot. Metcalfe's language kindles as he reviews 'the spirit and firmness' with which his supporters had fought the canal navvies. The election law, which gave only two days for all votes to come in—time too little for such a large constituency—had also done yeoman service. The candidates 'supporting her Majesty's Government . . . secured their success without ascertaining on which side the majority of the aggregate body of electors actually was, as the whole could not, for want of time, be brought to the poll.' In the elections of last April, results had gone the other way, 'the hired ruffians' of the wrong cause having seized the polling stations and excluded the British from voting. What had now happened was a very pleasing reversal of that judgment.

'Having secured this undoubted triumph by fair and honourable means',<sup>2</sup> Metcalfe began to prepare to go. He had been unwilling to do this, 'if I bequeathed this government in a state of embarrassment to my successor',<sup>3</sup> or so long as Her Majesty's Ministers thought his presence in Canada of use. But now he had (as he saw things) snatched the Colony from being lost to the Empire, and his own affairs were a pit of misery. One eye was

<sup>1</sup>F. Hincks, *Reminiscences*, 17.

<sup>2</sup>Kaye, ii, 564.

<sup>3</sup>Metcalfe to Lord Stanley, April 4, 1845.

## FAILURE

quenched for ever, 'without a symptom of returning sight'; 'that which in a double sense is left', he adds, with a flicker of brave humour, is 'so weak and irritable that the least use of it painfully affects both'.<sup>1</sup> He was persuading himself that he could 'be resigned and cheerful' even if he went totally blind.

Her Majesty's Ministers realised that they could keep him at his torture no longer, and determined to make the way of retirement as happy as the circumstances permitted. Most people thought he should have been ennobled after his Jamaica service; and Sir Robert Peel, November 30, 1844, asked the Queen to raise him to the peerage. The very same day, she 'most highly approved . . . for he has shown such a desire to do his duty in the midst of so many difficulties, and such extreme disinterestedness, that he richly deserves this mark of the Queen's entire approbation and favor'. Metcalfe told his sister of his approaching elevation. He was to be Baron Metcalfe of Fernhill in the County of Berks. Unable to go out except in a closed carriage, he knew it was an empty honour. 'The mere Rank & Title, if divested by infirmities of the power of rendering useful service in the House of Lords, will be Encumbrances, and will not add one jot to the Happiness which I still hope to enjoy in living in retirement with you.'<sup>2</sup>

Canadian writers have resented the bestowal of what was so long overdue, and valueless when it came at last. 'To impress public opinion in Canada the Governor-General was made a peer.'<sup>3</sup> The Queen 'rewarded the plucky absolutist by raising him to the peerage.'<sup>4</sup> That Metcalfe's views of the Crown's rights entirely agreed with Victoria's own is true. But 'reward' is hardly the word for his advancement. He cared nothing for it; and life was dust and ashes.

It was still battle, however. He might be blind and unsightly.

<sup>1</sup>Clive Bayley MSS. December 11, 1844.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.* December 27.

<sup>3</sup>*Life of Robert Baldwin*, 212.

<sup>4</sup>George Bryce, *A Short History of the Canadian People*, 365.

## FAILURE

But he was undefeated; and he was not thinking of himself. His Parliament met, and he managed to secure by a majority of three the election as Speaker of Sir Alan McNab, a Tory of Tories, a famous hero of Rebellion days. The Address scraped through by a majority of six.

In desperation Metcalfe set himself to become a politician, old as he was. As Kaye delightfully puts it, 'he was compelled to sanction a departure from that open, straightforward course . . . which he had all his life been steadfastly pursuing'.<sup>1</sup> In the elections he had thrown to the winds all pretence of neutrality or of being above politics, as the Queen's representative. And this new crisis required that he should put every card on the table, including some which the Opposition never expected to see on the table—from his hand. 'He descended from the high position which he had previously occupied throughout nearly half a century of public service, and became, in his own estimation' (and also, though Kaye refrains from saying so, in the estimation of some of the enemy also), 'something of a trickster'.<sup>2</sup> His Ministry were men of small weight, and even they began to slip away by resignation. 'I have now again to fish in troubled waters', he told Lord Stanley, 'for an Inspector-General, and for a Lower Canada Solicitor-General.' In this manner, his Administration creaked along through the winter, spring and summer. There was only one man in the Government who mattered, and that was the Governor-General, who could hardly leave his darkened room. 'I remain at my post', he wrote, in March 1845.

He was almost totally blind; he could eat only with agony and difficulty; his whole body was racked with pains, some dully rheumatic, some sharply tormenting. At last, October 13, 1845, he told Lord Stanley, 'My disorder has recently made a serious advance, affecting my articulation and all the functions of the mouth; there is a hole through the cheek into the interior of the

<sup>1</sup>*Life of Metcalfe*, ii, 566.

<sup>2</sup>Hincks (*Reminiscences*, 146) gives an example—which does not seem to me worthy of the reprobation bestowed on it.

## FAILURE

mouth.' His doctors warned him that he would soon be physically incapable of performing the duties of his office. He would ask to go now, but the winter was so near that this might inconvenience the Ministry in England. 'I propose to struggle on as well as I can, and will address your Lordship again on this subject according to any further changes that may occur in my condition.' He was prepared to stay until he had rotted piecemeal into his grave. A fortnight passed, and he reported (October 29) that he was unable to receive visitors or to leave his private house, and was 'consequently conscious that I am inadequately performing the duties of my office'. Plainly his mind, too, was clouding over, as well as his eyes. He still seemed to think it of public importance that he should carry on, and 'abstained from submitting my formal resignation'.

Lord Stanley, however, took alarm, and made up his mind for him. He wrote, November 2, a letter which crossed the last one I have cited, and enclosed 'an official letter, accepting your resignation' (which had not been tendered), and instructing him to hand over the Government provisionally to Earl Cathcart.

Kaye thinks that Metcalfe saved Canada by exercise of that moderation so esteemed by the Anglo-Indian mind. 'A little too much concession, or a little too much resistance to the inevitable progress of Liberalism, would have severed the Canadian provinces from the British Empire.'<sup>1</sup> But what saved them was the fact that opinion was still so divided that luck played a deciding part, and on the Empire's side. The trend of Canadian opinion was clearly set towards complete self-government, with only a ceremonial link with the mother country. Metcalfe's real triumph was one within his own suffering mind and body, in the kindness which was never more apparent than when his pain was most intolerable. When Quebec was ravaged by fires, in May and June, 1845, it was the dying Governor-General who led the way

<sup>1</sup>*Life of Metcalfe*, ii, 604. A year later, Sir James Stephen pessimistically noted in his diary that Lord Elgin's appointment as Governor-General of Canada might very likely be the last ever made.

## FAILURE

in the generous help that came from non-Canadians; £100,000 was collected in Great Britain, a valuable addition to £35,000 collected in Canada and elsewhere. His nobility 'was not merely quiet endurance, but a constant good-humored cheerfulness and lightness of heart. . . . To those who, like me, have seen three Governors of Canada literally worried to death, this was a glorious spectacle.'<sup>1</sup> 'The winter was setting in; the navigation was closing.'<sup>2</sup> He summoned his Council to his room, and told them that he left it for them to decide. Was he to go or was he to remain? In this heart-breaking fashion, the issue of Responsible Government was settled at last, with the blind diseased Governor asking his Councillors if they wished him to remain. They broke down, in a tumult of emotion, and said he must go, on the chance of still saving his life. He accepted their decision, and went.

Even amid the clamour of exultant hatred that pursued him there remained a memory of that last scene; and a tradition has persisted which will one day make for kindlier thought of the man who has stood to Canadians for sheerly unintelligent obstruction and tyranny.

<sup>1</sup>E. Gibbon Wakefield, *View of Sir Charles Metcalfe's Government of Canada*, 7.

<sup>2</sup>Kaye, ii, 602.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE END

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'We now bid your Lordship *farewell!* and as long as memory remains, so long will your Lordship's name and fame and virtues live in our affections, and be cherished by our posterity.'—Address by the Western District, Canada, 1846.

'But not the praise',  
Phoebus replied (and touched my trembling ears);  
'Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
Nor in the glistening foil  
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,  
But lives and spreads abroad by those pure eyes  
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove!  
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed.'—*Lycidas*.

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He reached England, December 16, 1845, and took a house in London. He was without hope, and knew that he could never take his seat in the House of Lords. His sister read him the outlined ceremonial of his reception, sent by Garter King-at-Arms. It was interesting, but irrelevant. He drove out in Hyde Park in a darkened carriage, and outside his room Georgiana played her harp, as their sister had played hers to blind mad George III. He saw friends. He got about as he could.

Correspondents flooded him with suggestions of remedies. Malvern, Karlsbad, mesmerism, homoeopathy, infusions of dock-leaf or couch-grass, plasters of rose-leaves, olive-oil and turnip-juice, of pure ox-gall, of copperas and vinegar, of Florence oil and red precipitate, of young frogs mixed with powders—these were among the remedies recommended. It is the misfortune of those who suffer from his dreadful disease, that they are the prey of every kind of quack. Metcalfe knew he was beyond help.

## THE END

Lord Auckland, whose shortcomings were political only, presided, January 12, 1846, over a meeting which should have been one of welcome, though its members, as Sir James Weir Hogg put it, felt they were casting 'a wreath upon his bier'. Governors-General, Governors, Chief Justices, Commanders-in-Chief, distinguished administrators and soldiers, Directors of the Company, signed an Address which differs from the majority of such documents by reason of the emotion that breathes through it. They had hoped that he would have returned 'to take your well-merited place among the hereditary legislators of your native country. . . . It has not pleased Divine Providence to permit the entire fulfilment of our affectionate anticipations. But you have achieved distinctions . . . you have gathered a large measure of glory for yourself, and, what is far dearer to you, you have secured to your country many important advantages, with a prospect that your labor will yield a still richer harvest at no distant period. And the very circumstance which has compelled you to retire prematurely from public life has enabled you to display such heroic firmness and devotion to the public weal, and such trial of moral strength over physical evil, as have . . . placed your name in the rank of those patriots who were ever prepared cheerfully to suffer or die for their native land.'

'It is easy', said Metcalfe, when Auckland brought him this tribute, 'to bear up against ill usage, but such kindness as this quite overpowers me.' 'See what a great man you are,' said Georgiana, 'that they must follow you with their admiration even to your sick chamber!' 'Yes,' he answered. 'And yet, what should I be now, if I had not always felt that eternity was the only thing worth living for?' He sent back a passionate response. Some of those who had signed the Address were men 'under whom I have had the honor of serving; some whose public services I have had the honor of superintending; some with whom I have cooperated as colleagues; some who, as schoolfellows, have known me from boyhood'. So he runs

## THE END

through their categories. And the whole proceeding exhibited 'an accumulation of condescension, affection, kindness, and generosity, for which no words can convey a due sense of the feelings of respect and gratitude and heartfelt emotion by which I am almost overwhelmed'.

The Metcalfe Hall, built by public subscription to celebrate more especially his liberation of the press, was opened in Calcutta, and on July 4 Lord Auckland conveyed to him an address from India's capital. Metcalfe felt as if his heart was breaking. He replied, July 10, to 'the Inhabitants of Calcutta', that he could not, in 'the infirmities which beset me, and the hopeless state of my health', say anything adequate. 'I must therefore confine myself to the expression of the fervent thanks of a grateful heart, which is fully sensible of your kindness. . . . My anxious hope that prosperity and every other blessing may attend you will accompany me to the grave which is open at my feet.'

In April, 1846, he settled at Basingstoke. He rose for family prayers at nine every morning, listened to the papers, and dictated letters. In the evening he drove out in his closed carriage, and afterwards Georgiana played the harp that he had given her when he was in India. 'I hope your Lordship has enjoyed your drive', said a servant once. 'Enjoyment is now no word for me,' he answered. But duty and unfailing benevolence still held their unchallenged places, and he replied to appeals to his generosity.

He could not sit or vote in the House of Lords. But Lord Radnor asked his opinion as to the effect of the abolition of the Corn Laws on Canadian opinion; and Metcalfe wrote, May 28, 1846, that he was not only very anxious for their abolition, but wished that along with them all duties on imports might go, 'having been of opinion, as long as I have been able to think on the subject, that taxing the food of the poor is a monstrous injustice'. His opinion was 'irrespective' of the effect of abolition on Canada, 'because I think that the interests of a part must yield to those of the whole of the empire'. 'At first sight', the Corn Laws' going 'would appear to be injurious, as it deprives Canada

## THE END

of the advantage of a monopoly, but Canada, I trust, will benefit like other countries from freedom of trade, and ultimately not be a loser'. Incapacitated from attending to his duty, he thought it presumptuous to authorise communication of his sentiments to his fellow-peers, 'but I have no desire that they should be secret'.

In May, he felt often 'a sinking which seems like an approach to dissolution'. In June, he thought, 'general decay is perceptible'. 'I continue to make progress in a fatal direction,' he wrote to Butterworth Bayley, July 31, in a farewell letter offering him the bust of Lord Wellesley which the latter had given him. He began to suffer from hæmorrhage in the neck, from bursting veins. August drew to its close, and fever set in. He asked to see Mary Higginson, daughter of his Secretary in Canada. In her illness, when he had thought she must die, he had written distressed letters; she had lived, and was seven years old. He had refrained as long as he could from asking to see her, for her sake. But 'I think the termination of my sufferings must now be close at hand'. She came, and for a week she spent much time with him, reading the Bible to him daily. Then he sent her away, 'that the dear child may not remain to witness the event'.

On September 4, the end drew obviously on. He did not leave his bedroom, and took no food, and next morning he was known to be sinking. Pain at last left him entirely, having done all it could. In the afternoon Georgiana's family knelt round him, and in patriarchal manner he laid his hands on their heads and blessed them. Then Georgiana took her harp. 'How sweet those sounds are!' he whispered, and to their music he composed his spirit to pass. The end came, at about eight in the evening, September 5, 1846.

His personal estate in the province of Canterbury was estimated for duty at £100,000. Under his father's will, the Fernhill property and land near Bagshot accompanied the baronetcy, which went to his younger brother Thomas Theophilus, who received also the house and furniture in Portland Place, and

## THE END

furniture, plate and books that had come by bequest. To the Crown Charles Metcalfe returned the silver star, ribbon, and one jewel of the Civil Order of the Bath, together with the star received from the state at the time of his advancement to the Order. To James Macauley Higginson, his private secretary, he left £20,000; to his sister, the Viscountess Ashbrook, £1,000; to his other sister, Mrs. Georgiana Smyth, an annuity of £500; to his trustees and executors, £1,000 each. The residue, over and above £50,000, and all books, plate, engravings, purchased by him, his Court dresses, diamond star, collar, and one of the jewels of the Civil Order of the Bath, and all other jewels not specifically disposed of, he left to Lieutenant James Metcalfe, who was to take charge of all his papers. All legacies and annuities were to be paid in full, free of duty.

Lieutenant James Metcalfe, thus acknowledged as his son, though not so named, rose to be Colonel Metcalfe, C.B., and was Lord Dalhousie's Aide-de-Camp, and afterwards Lord Clyde's. He acted throughout the Mutiny as the latter's interpreter, and was with him from the first day of his service in India to the last.

Lord Metcalfe was buried in the Metcalfe family vault, at Winkfield, near Fernhill, September 15, 1846. On a tablet in the church was inscribed what has been called the finest memorial tribute in the language, the work of Macaulay. It may be read in the Appendix to this book. Its very eloquence makes it seem out of place, at the end of such a last chapter as has had to be written.

## APPENDIX A

### LORD ELLENBOROUGH'S QUESTIONS TO LORD WILLIAM BENTINCK

Lord Ellenborough wrote:

'We must bring the total expenditure, here and in India, within the income, and so much within the income as to be enabled to reduce taxation. India cannot rise under the pressure of present taxation; and to make the people of that country consumers of the manufactures of England we must first make them rich.'

The Governor-General agreed, but asked for guidance.

Another question was, Would there be greater efficiency if the Government were administered in the name of the King? Bentinck said: 'We are the sovereigns of India; and those who like myself are of opinion that British supremacy cannot be too strongly and decidedly declared, by an assumption of all the attributes of sovereign power, by a coinage bearing the British arms, by a British Code and by encouraging the British language, the key of all improvements, may conceive that the name of the King is essential to this impression.' But was he right in thinking that the people of India knew nothing about England—'the local Government is everything'? If he were, 'I apprehend that the denomination is a mere matter of indifference'. Bentinck added bitterly:

'The name of the King hitherto has been unfortunately associated with the evils of the Supreme Court and with the still greater evils of the Appeals to the Privy Council.'

Reminded of the Law's iniquitous cost, and harking back to the problem at the back of every Indian question—of expenditure, expenditure, expenditure—Bentinck asked, Is the present divi-

## APPENDIX A

sion into Presidencies right, 'with the expensive Machinery of Separate Councils and Boards'?

That opened up a field of allied questions—questions asked many times since, and left unanswered, or perhaps answered wrongly. Should there not be *one* strong Central Government? Either permanently in one place—or peripatetic, 'for the purpose of better superintendence and controul,' while a delegated authority remained in Calcutta? (Incidentally, it should be noticed that this was precisely the practice of Lord William himself, during most of his service as Governor-General.) At present, the two subordinate Presidencies were subordinate only in name.

'Their acts are only made known to us through the copies of their Despatches to the Court of Directors, when after the act is done it becomes extremely inconvenient to interpose.' Would it not be better to exercise a direct control over them, 'not *occasionally* but *always*'?

Then there was the question of agency. 'I am disposed to think highly of the Civil Service.' Its members did not perhaps 'have the same high bearing as in the time of Lord Wellesley, but this effect was then produced by the peculiar circumstances of the times, which have in a great measure ceased to operate. . . . It can not be said, however, that the country is well governed. The instruments are very defective. . . . The administration of Justice is admitted by all . . . to be slow, expensive and unsatisfactory to the people. The Police again is universally condemned as a source of general oppression'—statements which remind us how stagnant the internal affairs of India have remained (inside their 'iron framework'), while the outside world has known a century of, if not progress, certainly change (which the Greek philosopher thought 'the sweetest thing of all to men'). Yet if native agency were employed on any large scale, 'it will be indispensably necessary to cut off every European Functionary, Civil and Military, whose services can be dispensed with'—a grim question to be faced by two men aware that their own countrymen were clamouring for their ignominious recall to England.

## APPENDIX A

What about bringing the East India Company's Army under the King? Its officers 'have heretofore seen and felt the superior advantages in point of promotion, which the King's officers, to their prejudice, have enjoyed'. On the other hand, 'they have had the exclusive possession of Civil, Military and Political appointments'. 'If the separate protection of the Court of Directors were withdrawn, this monopoly would scarcely be expected to continue.' Then, if the Sepoy forces remained a local and distinct militia, 'must not there continue a decided inferiority in that part of the Army which has not the same opportunities of general service and distinction, which cannot enjoy the same portion of the national interest, and with whom money, and not fame, must, from the natural force of circumstances, be the ruling object?' Even so, would it not be well—and be a saving—if the three Presidency Armies became one? The present arrangement was based on the assumption that the Presidencies were three distinct countries, 'with separate interests and separate *enemies*,' whereas Madras had no enemies of any sort—'no hostile frontier, and nothing within or without to disturb its tranquillity'.



*APPENDIX B*

MACAULAY'S EPITAPH ON METCALFE

Near This Stone is Laid  
Charles Theophilus, First and Last Lord Metcalfe,  
A Statesman tried in Many High Posts and Difficult Conjunctions,  
And Found Equal to All.  
The Three Greatest Dependencies of the British Crown  
Were Successively Entrusted to His Care.  
In India His Fortitude, His Wisdom, His Probity, and His  
Moderation  
Are Held in Honorable Remembrance  
By Men of Many Races, Languages, and Religions.  
In Jamaica, still Convulsed by a Social Revolution,  
He Calmed the Evil Passions  
Which Long Suffering Had Engendered in One Class,  
And Long Domination in Another.  
In Canada, Not Yet Recovered from the Calamities of Civil War,  
He Reconciled Contending Factions  
To Each Other and to the Mother Country.  
Public Esteem was the Just Reward of His Public Virtue,  
But Those Only Who Enjoyed the Privilege of His Friendship  
Could Appreciate the Whole Worth of His Gentle and Noble  
Nature.  
Costly Monuments in Asiatic and American Cities  
Attest the Gratitude of Nations which he Ruled;  
This Tablet Records the Sorrow and the Pride  
With Which His Memory is Cherished by Private Affection.  
He Was Born the 30th Day of January, 1785.  
He Died the 5th Day of September, 1846.

## APPENDIX C

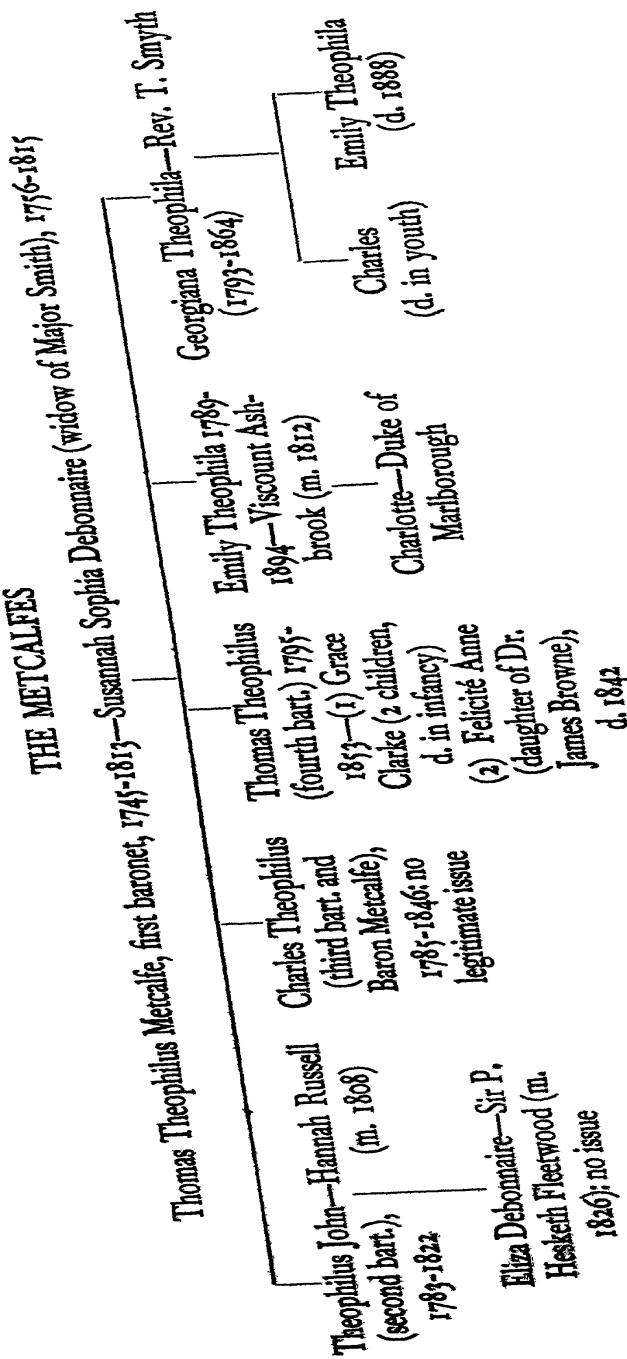
### THE METCALFE FAMILY

Miss Mary Clive Bayley, a direct descendant of the fourth baronet, Charles Metcalfe's younger brother, the 'Tom' of his letters home to his sister, has supplied me with the table which follows; and also with interesting information of the connection of the Metcalfes with other great Anglo-Indian families.

Félicité Anne, wife of Sir Thomas Theophilus Metcalfe, the fourth baronet, was one of a large family. Her eldest brother, Sir Samuel Browne, won the V.C. in the storming of Delhi in the Mutiny. His right arm was severed from the shoulder by a sabre-cut from a Sowar, in the fierce street fighting, and he invented the 'Sam Browne' belt to overcome his disability, and the belt, as everyone knows, has become part of ordinary infantry equipment. Félicité's eldest sister Mary married Edward Colvin, I.C.S., and her younger sister Charlotte married George Lawrence, brother of Henry and John. Félicité never became Lady Metcalfe, dying in 1842. I have omitted her descendants in the printed table, since they would have carried this book too widely afield.

It is perhaps justifiable to note that Dame Ethel Smyth is a descendant of Georgiana Metcalfe's husband, the Rev. T. Smyth, by his first wife, and therefore has some connection with Lord Metcalfe.

## THE METCALFES



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## INDEX

- Aberdeen, Lord, 363  
 Abingdon, 10, 48  
 Adam, John, 49, 70, 115, 128, 148,  
     152 ff., 162, 168, 172, 177, 184,  
     193, 196, 199, 214 ff., 217 ff., 223,  
     228, 318, 320 ff.  
 Afghanistan and Afghans, 73 ff., 86,  
     326; Afghan War, 155, 284, 339  
 Aga Nebi Khan, 77  
 Agra, 44, 47, 156, 253, 255, 279,  
     308 ff., 322, 324 ff.  
 Ahmadnagar, 44, 192  
 Ajmer, 175  
*Akalis*, 98  
 Akbar II, 69, 139 ff., 325  
 Albany (New York, U.S.A.), 358  
 Albert, Prince Consort, 357  
 Aligarh, 44  
 Alipur, 260  
 Allahabad, 140, 312, 324  
 Allard, General, 285, 304  
 Alwar, 251  
 Americans, 301. *See* U.S.A.  
 Amherst, Lord, 237 ff., 240 ff., 252 ff.,  
     261, 281 ff., 286, 318  
 Aminchand, 163  
 Amir Khan, 46, 51 ff., 58, 63, 117,  
     143, 146 ff., 156 ff., 168 ff., 172,  
     290  
 Amritsar, 76, 92 ff., 96 ff., 103  
 Apa Sahib, 168 ff.  
 Apples, 285  
 Arcot, Nawab of, 193  
 Argaon, battle of, 44  
 Armstrong, J., 47  
 Army, 264, 276 ff., 414 ff.
- Arnold, Matthew, 274  
 Ashbrook, Lady. *See* Metcalfe, Emily  
 Assaye, battle of, 44, 171  
 Auckland, Lord, 314, 316, 322 ff.,  
     409 ff.  
 Aurangabad, 206, 210  
 Aurangzeb, 150, 202  
 Ava, 296  
 Aziz-ud-Din, 96
- Babar, 162  
 Bagot, Sir Charles, 360, 364 ff., 371 ff.,  
     375 ff., 383 ff.  
 Bahadur Shah II, 324 ff.  
 Baldwin, Robert, 363 ff., 372, 385 ff.,  
     389  
 Ballot, Secret, the, 338, 356  
 Banking systems of America, 396  
 Baptist Missionaries, 310, 344 ff., 354,  
     386  
 Baptiste, Jean, 152  
 Barlow, Sir George, 37, 55, 57, 59 ff.,  
     68, 70 ff., 100, 104, 152, 171, 173,  
     273  
 Barnes, Sir E., 276 ff.  
 Barrackpur, 25, 316; Barrackpur  
     Mutiny, 238  
*Basanti* livery, 285 .  
 Basingstoke, 410  
*Batta*, 264, 270, 276  
 Bayley, William Butterworth, 52, 67,  
     126, 177, 218, 223, 228, 260 ff.,  
     264, 274, 411  
 Benares, 27 ff., 134, 276, 279  
 Bengal, 130 ff., 237, 267 ff., 273, 300,  
     308, 319, 322

# INDEX

- Bengal Bank, the, 7  
 Bengali, 23  
 Bentinck, Lord William, 54, 70, 118,  
 130, 134, 156, 250, 261 ff., 273 ff.,  
 276 ff., 314, 320 ff., 323, 340, 374,  
 413 ff.  
 Berar, 191, 193: Raja of. *See* Bhonsla  
 Bharatpur, 46, 48 ff., 51, 144 ff., 148,  
 151, 155, 242 ff., 260, 329 ff.  
 Bhonsla Raja, 44, 147, 152, 156,  
 168 ff., 171 ff.  
 Bhopal, 143, 152 ff., 292  
 Bikaner, 255, 287  
 Birch, G., 163  
 Birkenhead, Lord, 364  
 Bishop's College, 257  
 Blake, Ensign, 79  
 Blunt, William, 280, 295, 301, 309,  
 374  
 Bolshevism, 21  
 Bombay, 144, 147, 205, 272 ff., 275,  
 282, 284, 300, 315, 319, 335  
 Boston (U.S.A.), 358  
 Briggs, Colonel, 279 ff.  
 Bristol, 136  
 Brodie, Sir Benjamin, 340  
 Bromley, Mr., 7  
 Bromley, Mr. Tait's Academy at, 9,  
 18  
 Brougham, Lord, 298, 315  
 Browne, General Sir Samuel, 417  
 Brownrigg, Mr., 235, 253  
 Buckingham, James Silk, 318 ff.  
 Buller, Sir Charles, 363  
 Bundelkhand, 47, 153  
 Bundi, 55  
 Buonaparte. *See* Napoleon  
 Burma and Burmese, 237 ff., 251,  
 296  
 Burnes, Sir Alexander, 24, 79, 316  
 Bushby, Mr., 240  
 Bushire, 77  
 Butler, Bishop, 326  
 Cabinet, British, 315, 322 ff., 340,  
 352, 356, 369, 392, 406  
 Cadell, Colonel George C., 315  
 Calcutta, 6 ff., 20 ff., 36 ff., 41 ff., 50,  
 60, 64 ff., 71, 103 ff., 111, 141 ff.,  
 145, 155, 161, 164 ff., 172, 176 ff.,  
 179 ff., 189, 195, 199 ff., 203, 207 ff.,  
 237 ff., 240 ff., 244, 270 ff., 273 ff.,  
 276 ff., 290, 303, 305, 309 ff., 312,  
 319, 327, 330, 333, 340, 374, 410  
*Calcutta Journal*, 317  
 Campbell, Sir Archibald, 251  
 Canada, 356 ff., 410  
 Canning, George, 166, 313  
 Canton, 17, 39  
 Cape of Good Hope, 2 ff., 112  
 Capital Punishment, 123 ff., 136, 352  
 Carlyle, Thomas, 170, 298  
 Carnatic, The, 199, 211  
 Caroline, Queen, 182  
*Caroline*, The, 361  
 Castlereagh, Lord, 38  
 Catholic Emancipation, 300  
 Cawnpore, 29 ff., 41, 47 ff., 163,  
 276 ff., 329  
 Chandu Lal, 190 ff., 203 ff., 208 ff.,  
 227, 229 ff., 270  
 Charter Acts, 135 ff., 265, 308  
*Chauth*, 200  
 Chesterfield, Lord, 202  
 China and Chinese, 180, 253: China  
 Trade, 15, 39, 54, 104, 136, 180  
 Chittagong, 238  
 Chota Nagpur, 306  
 Christians and Christianity, 30, 38,  
 200, 203, 302, 344 ff.  
 Church of England, 337, 344, 352  
 Church Rates, 337  
 Cis-Satlaj Sikh States, 75 ff., 88 ff.,  
 94 ff., 117  
 Civil Code and Administration, 117 ff.  
 Clare, Lord, 274, 319 ff., 339  
 Clarence, Duke of, 110

# INDEX

- Clarke, Sir Alured, 23, 51  
 Clifton (Bristol), 332  
 Clive, Robert, 2, 61, 68, 163  
 Close, Barry, 66, 259  
 Clyde, Lord (Sir Colin Campbell), 412  
 Cole, Arthur, 57, 105  
 Collins, Colonel John, 27 ff., 32, 35 ff., 49, 56, 68, 101, 105  
 Columbia, River, 398  
 Colvin, Edward, 417  
 Combermere, Lord, 246 ff., 260  
 Commons, House of, 110, 135  
 Concord Bridge, 385  
 Conservatives, 336; (Canada), 367 ff., 370 ff., 377 ff., 381  
 Control, Board of, 265, 307, 332  
 Coote, Sir Eyre, 173  
 Corn Laws, 337, 339, 356, 410  
 Cornwallis, Lord, 54 ff., 60, 100, 267  
 Corruption, 310, 336. *See* Hyderabad, Lucknow, Oudh, *Munshis*  
 'Cow-Music', 69  
 Criminal Code and Administration, 117 ff.  
 Cumberland, Duke of, 110  
 Cunningham, J. D., 74  
 Cunninghame, Major E. W., 137 ff., 289  
 Currie, Dr., 194  
 Customs Line, 322  
 Cuttack, 156  
  
 Dacoity, 120  
 Dalhousie, Lord, 412  
 Daly, Mr., 389, 400  
 Debonnaire, Susannah. *See* Metcalfe, Lady  
 Delhi, 44, 64 ff., 76, 97, 101, 106 ff., 113 ff., 117 ff., 137 ff., 162 ff., 172 ff., 180, 183, 185 ff., 187, 207, 237, 241 ff., 251 ff., 270 ff., 273, 279, 281 ff., 286, 291 ff., 304, 326, 330, 351  
 Delhi, King of, 44, 68 ff., 113, 117 ff., 125, 127, 137 ff., 154, 202, 267 ff., 281, 286 ff., 324 ff., 330  
 Demerara, 347  
 Devonshire, 358, 360  
 Dharna, Sitting, 93  
 Dholpur, 294  
 Dibdin's Sea-Songs, 341  
 Dig, Storm of, 48 ff., 228, 247, 311, 330  
 Directors of the East India Company, 10, 15, 17, 43, 52, 74, 78, 100, 109, 114 ff., 155 ff., 160, 166, 181, 195, 198 ff., 201, 221 ff., 226 ff., 245 ff., 253 ff., 258, 262, 270, 280, 288, 290, 307 ff., 314 ff., 322 ff., 328 ff., 331 ff., 334 ff., 409, 415  
 Doctors, 240, 340, 355, 388, 406  
 Dours, 52  
 Doveton, Colonel, 169  
 Dowdeswell, George, 70, 156  
 Doyle, Sir John, 227  
 Draper, Mr., 394, 399 ff.  
 Durham, Lord, 362, 364 ff., 368 ff., 381  
 Durjan Sal, Maharaja, 246  
 Dutch, 199. *See* Java  
 Dyer, General, 318  
  
 East India Company. *See* Directors of, Proprietors of, etc.  
 East Indians. *See* Eurasians  
 East Indies. *See* Java  
 Economy and economics, 52, 54 ff., 60 ff., 72, 107 ff., 113 ff., 138 ff., 158 ff., 163, 166, 180 ff., 187, 235 ff., 259, 266, 304, 360  
 Eden, Emily, 326  
 Edmonstone, N.B., 70, 76 ff., 82, 86, 89 ff., 97, 103, 106, 128, 155 ff., 163, 190, 323  
 Education, 136, 234, 302 ff., 339  
 Edwardes, Herbert, 318



# INDEX

- Elephants, 29, 31 ff., 80, 83  
 Elgin, Lord, 406  
 Ellenborough, Lord, 265, 413 ff.  
 Ellis, J., 137 ff.  
 Elphinstone, Mountstuart, 24, 59, 63, 75 ff., 84, 86, 134, 142, 162, 178, 183, 259, 273, 304, 307, 314 ff., 393  
 English language in India, 302, 321  
 Equestrian exercise, 11, 19, 34, 48, 52, 63, 260, 326, 353  
 Eton and Etonians, 10 ff., 22 ff., 25 ff., 30, 41, 43, 177, 228, 236 ff., 274, 322, 353  
 Eurasians, 101 ff., 301  
 Ewer, Walter, 126, 240, 277 ff.
- Fagan, C. S., 52, 90  
 Family Compact, The, 370, 377  
 Famine, 326 ff.  
 Fane, Sir H., 323 ff., 326  
 Faridkote, 99  
 Fateh Singh, 80 ff., 89  
 Fendall, John, 196, 223, 374  
 Ferguson, Lieutenant, 79  
 Fernhill (Berks), 234 ff., 333 ff., 339, 355, 404, 411 ff.  
 Fernhill (Himalayas), 253  
 FitzGerald, Edward, 24  
 Fort William College, 24 ff., 30, 110, 280  
 Fox, Charles James, 202  
 France and the French, 21 ff., 31, 44, 71, 74 ff., 84 ff., 87, 96 ff., 138 ff., 142, 283, 298, 304, 361, 368, 372, 375 ff., 390, 394, 398 ff., 402  
 Fraser, William, 112, 133 ff., 148 ff.  
 French Revolution, 21, 353
- George III, 233, 408  
 George IV. *See* Prince Regent  
 Gibbon, Edward, 45  
 Gillespie, General Rollo, 247  
 Glasgow, 136, 340  
 Glazebrook, G. P., 371  
 Glenbervie, Lady, 105  
 Globe Insurance Company, 10  
 Godavari, River, 193 ff.  
 Goodall, Dr., 10 ff., 13 ff., 18, 228, 232, 236 ff., 353  
 Govinda Baksh, 191  
 Grant, Charles, 54, 307, 313  
 Grey, Lord, 361  
 Gurkhas. *See* Nepal  
 Gwalior, 46, 324. *Also see* Sindhia
- Hafiz, 24, 303  
 Hafiz-ud-Din, 57, 271 ff.  
 Halifax (Nova Scotia), 358  
 Hamilton (Canada), 395  
 Hardwar, 74, 77  
 Harington, John Herbert, 253  
 Harris, General, 22  
*Hartal*, 93  
 Hastings, Marian, 104  
 Hastings, Lord, 110, 113, 115, 148, 151 ff., 164, 166 ff., 176 ff., 185 ff., 189, 193 ff., 207 ff., 240, 266, 286  
 Hastings, Warren, 20, 68, 103 ff., 110, 128, 135, 152, 167, 176, 259, 300, 317, 319  
 Hatim Tai, 216  
 Heber, Bishop, 101, 238, 240  
 Hervey, James, 62 ff.  
 Hewett, General, 75, 89, 91, 98  
 Heytesbury, Lord, 322  
 Hibernian Lodges, 378  
 Hickey, William, 5 ff.  
 Hicky, James A., 317  
 Higginson, Captain, 386, 412  
 Higginson, Mary, 411  
 High Court Judges, 280, 300
- Gaekwar, The, 199  
 Ganga Narayan, 306  
 Gardner, the Hon. Edward, 112, 166, 292

# INDEX

- Himalayas, 253  
 Hincks, Sir F., 372 ff., 385 ff., 389, 402  
 Hindus, 69, 93, 139, 178, 289, 327, 393  
 Hindustani, 19, 23 ff., 302  
 Hislop, Lieutenant, 251  
 Hogg, J. Weir, 409  
 Holkar, Jeswant Rao, 44, 46 ff., 51 ff., 57 ff., 60, 62, 64, 73, 76, 86, 99 ff., 143, 145 ff., 260, 290, 329.  
*See* Indore  
 Holkar, Malhar Rao, 148, 157, 166 ff., 170 ff.  
 Homer, 15  
 Hood, Lady, 162  
 Hopkins, J. Castell, 379  
 Howe Boys, 25 ff., 49 ff., 57, 105, 154, 177, 227 ff., 260, 274  
 Hunt, 'Orator', 298  
 Hunters' Lodges, 361  
 Huskisson, Mr., 297  
 Huxley, Mr. Aldous, 30  
 Hyderabad (Deccan), 101, 114 ff., 186 ff., 189 ff., 235 ff., 238 ff., 247, 262, 270 ff., 277, 292, 295, 315, 317, 328, 351, 367  
 Imam-ud-Din, 93  
 Indians, American, 382 ff., 398  
 Indore, 171. *See* Holkar  
 Indus, River, 282 ff.  
 Inland Transit Duties, 321 ff.  
 Iroquois, 397  
 Ireland and Irish, 361, 377 ff., 402  
 Jackson, Randall, 227  
 Jacquemont, Victor, 263 ff., 302, 304  
 Jaipur, 31 ff., 46, 55, 145 ff., 157, 168, 242, 253  
 Jamaica, 127, 337, 340 ff., 357, 360, 365, 367, 386, 404  
 James I, King, 65  
 Japan, 104  
 Java, 106, 142, 199  
 Jenkins, Richard, 24, 151, 163 ff., 169, 178, 183, 204  
 Jind, 75  
 Jodhpur, 255  
 Jumna River, 22, 51, 61, 73, 76 ff., 96, 141, 152, 154  
 Kabul, 75 ff., 84 ff., 97, 155  
 Kaital, 75  
 Kalunga Disaster, 247  
 Karim Khan, 154  
 Kasauli, 253  
 Kaye, J. W., 2, 9, 11, 15, 35, 40, 73, 101, 107, 126, 131, 155, 187, 221 ff., 257, 317, 326, 384, 399, 405 ff.  
 Kathmandu, 166  
*Khilats*, 286  
*Khojis*, 121  
 Khuda Baksh, 271  
 King's Officers, 63, 415  
 Kingston (Canada), 358 ff., 395, 398  
 Kingston (Jamaica), 345  
 Kinnaird, Douglas, 227 ff.  
 Knibb, Rev. William, 347 ff., 352  
 Kirkpatrick, William, 101  
 Kols, 306  
 Kotah, 31, 45  
 LaFontaine, Louis-Hippolyte, 385 ff., 389 ff.  
 Lahore, 73, 75 ff., 93  
 Laili (Ranjit's mare), 73  
 Lake District, 179  
 Lake, General, 44, 46 ff., 57 ff., 60, 68, 73, 77, 80, 94, 130  
 Lamb, George, 193, 210  
 Land Settlement, 129 ff., 205 ff., 267 ff.  
 Laswari, battle of, 44  
 Law Courts and Legal Procedure, 124, 300 ff., 352, 413 ff.

## INDEX

- Lawrence, George, 417  
 Lawrence, Henry, 238  
 Lawrence, John (Lord), 333  
 Lawtie, Lieutenant, 163  
 Leacock, Stephen, 366 ff., 373  
 Liberals, 336, 356, 406  
 Liverpool, 136, 358  
 Livingstone, David, 397  
 Lords, House of, 298, 410  
 Lotteries, 108  
 Loudoun, Lady, 168  
 Low, Sir John, 178, 295  
 Ludhiana, 73, 91, 98 ff., 117  
 Lucknow, 29, 277, 279, 292, 294
- Macaulay, Lord, 302, 309, 374, 412  
 McGill University, 398  
 Macheri, 148  
 MacKenzie, William Lyon, 377  
 McNab, Sir Alan, 405  
 Macpherson, Sir John, 8  
 Maddocks, T. H., 292, 294  
 Madras, 2 ff., 6, 104 ff., 261, 272 ff., 275, 309, 315, 328 ff.  
 Mahidpur, battle of, 171  
 Maidstone, 336  
 Maine Boundary Dispute, 397  
 Malcolm, John, 23, 45, 50, 55 ff., 63 ff., 75 ff., 109, 133 ff., 163, 171 ff., 178, 183 ff., 189, 195, 207, 259, 272 ff., 282, 300, 307, 319, 336  
 Malwa, 60  
 Marar (Ranjit Singh's mistress), 92 ff.  
 Marathas, 21 ff., 28 ff., 44, 51 ff., 61 ff., 67 ff., 73, 88, 95, 105, 117, 123, 130, 138, 140, 143 ff., 148 ff., 152 ff., 170 ff., 178, 183, 287, 326  
 Marjoribanks, 184 ff.  
 Marshman, Dr., 40  
 Martin, Dr., 240  
 Martin, W. B., 229  
*Martin Chuzzlewit*, 379
- Masulipatam, 202  
 Matthews, Captain, 82  
 Mauritius, 106, 145  
 May, Rev. C. S., 344 ff.  
 Meerut, 277  
 Melbourne, Lord, 321  
 Mercer, Graeme, 105  
 Merritt, Mr., 396  
 Metcalfe, Charles: ancestry, 1 ff.; schooldays, 9 ff.; first days in India, 21 ff.; service under Colonel Collins, 31 ff.; return to Calcutta, 37; Lake's Political Officer, 47 ff.; meets John Malcolm, 55; service in Delhi, 64 ff., 103 ff.; mission to Ranjit Singh, 73 ff.; later references to, 281 ff.; his Eurasian sons, 101, 178, 234, 252, 305; friendship with Lord Minto, 103 ff., 111 ff.; returns to Sindhia's camp, 105; his finances, 52, 60, 107 ff., 114 ff., 163, 180 ff., 235, 253; hatred of capital punishment, 124; and of cruelty, 254; abolishes mutilation, 123; and the slave trade, 127; and suttee, 127; views on land system, 129 ff., 267; and on British law courts, 124; troubles with Court of Delhi, 137 ff., 286 ff.; views on Native States, 143 ff., 154 ff., 167 ff., 245, 291 ff.; personal habits, 149; personal ambitions, 180 ff., 307 ff., 311 ff.; work at Hyderabad, 189 ff., 262; correspondence with Dr. Goodall, 236 ff.; despondency as regards British hold on India, 156, 238, 249, 266; visits Calcutta, 240; returns to Delhi, 241 ff.; creates 'paramountcy' doctrine and reduces Bharatpur, 244 ff.; life in Calcutta, 256 ff.; relations with Lord William Bentinck, 262 ff.,

## INDEX

- 297 ff.; his political views, 297 ff.; his cancer, 306, 340, 353 ff., 388, 394, 400 ff., 403 ff., 408 ff.; liberates press, 321; passed over for Governor-Generalship, 322 ff.; made G.C.B., 323; becomes Lieutenant-Governor of Agra, 323; institutes measures against plague, 327; is snubbed by Directors, 328; resigns, 329; leaves India, 330; lives in England, 332 ff.; expenses, 334; family disappointments, 334 ff.; is again passed over by Directors, 335; advises Conservatives, 336; and Working Classes, 337 ff.; denounces Afghan War, 339; goes to Jamaica as Governor, 340 ff.; troubles with Legislative Assembly and planters, 342 ff.; is amazed at negroes' independence, 343; troubles with Baptist missionaries, 347 ff.; reduces capital sentences, 352; dines at Windsor and meets Sir Robert Peel, 357; appointed Governor-General of Canada, 357; journey to Canada, 358 ff.; difficulties arising from character and conduct of his predecessors, 363 ff.; inability to understand responsible government, 372 ff., 391; his toleration and courtesy, 373, 393; troubles with Canadian politicians, 375 ff.; receives addresses, 379 ff.; visits Indian tribes, 382; refuses to surrender patronage, 389 ff.; presses mercantile and financial measures, 395 ff.; encourages Western exploration, 397; fails to win Canadian support, 399 ff.; sees Niagara Falls, 401; wins the election, 403; is raised to peerage, 404; is recalled, 406; last illness, 408 ff.; replies to tributes, 409 ff.; gives opinion on Corn Laws, 410; his death, 411; his estate, 411; acknowledges James Metcalfe as his son, 412; his answers to Lord Ellenborough's questions, 413 ff.
- Metcalfe, Emily (Lady Ashbrook), 8, 233, 332, 334 ff., 412
- Metcalfe family, the, 1 ff.
- Metcalfe, Frank, 101, 235, 340
- Metcalfe, Felicité Anne, 417
- Metcalfe, Georgiana (Mrs. Smyth), 8, 104, 116, 178 ff., 186, 189, 231 ff., 305, 322 ff., 332 ff., 335, 353 ff., 404, 409, 411 ff.
- Metcalfe, Henry Studholme, 101, 179, 234, 305, 340, 353
- Metcalfe, James, 101, 340, 412
- Metcalfe, Lady (Charles Metcalfe's mother), 2 ff., 10 ff., 18, 34, 39, 50, 54, 103 ff., 163
- Metcalfe, Mary, 417
- Metcalfe, Sir Theophilus (Charles Metcalfe's father), 1 ff., 10, 15 ff., 22, 25, 28, 33 ff., 38 ff., 53, 61, 64, 109 ff.
- Metcalfe, Theophilus John (Charles Metcalfe's elder brother), 8 ff., 15, 17 ff., 39, 41 ff., 54, 104, 163, 180, 233 ff.
- Metcalfe, Thomas Theophilus (Charles Metcalfe's younger brother), 8, 110, 411
- Middleton, Bishop, 240
- Milton, John, 369
- Minto, Lord, 28, 55, 70, 77, 103 ff., 110 ff., 141 ff., 152, 282, 317
- Minutes*, 45, 59, 79, 114, 145, 156, 192, 196 ff., 215, 228, 260 ff., 265, 275, 280, 282 ff., 293, 300, 328, 336, 380
- Mirza Jahangir, 140
- Missionaries, 136. *See* Baptist Missionaries

# INDEX

- Mississippi, River, 397  
Mogul Emperors, 127, 150, 163. *See*  
    Delhi, King of  
Mohurram, 98  
Moira, Lord. *See* Hastings, Lord  
Monson, Colonel, 47, 55  
Monson, Mrs. (Lady), 108, 324, 328,  
    353  
Monson, William (Lord), 339  
Montreal, 395 ff., 403  
Moore, Thomas, 24  
Moravian Missions, 349, 352  
Morin, Mr., 384, 392  
Morrison, J. L., 366, 375  
Morris, Mr., 400  
Muhammad Khan, 117, 143, 146 ff.,  
    157, 169  
Muhammadans, 69, 93, 98, 139, 178,  
    302, 393  
Munir-al-Mulk, 190, 202, 217 ff.  
Munro, Sir Thomas, 66, 133 ff., 259,  
    273, 307  
*Munshis*, 24, 30, 57, 105, 271 ff.  
Muntazim-ud-Daula (Charles Met-  
    calfe), 149 ff., 175  
Murray, Colonel, 85  
Mutiny, 238, 276 ff.: the Indian, 333  
Mutilation, 123  
Muttra (Mathura), 183  
Mysore, 21, 105, 114, 295 ff.
- Nabha, 73  
'Nabobs', 17  
Nagpur, 114, 169, 172, 178, 183, 204.  
    *See* Bhonsla Raja  
Napier, Sir Charles, 286  
Napoleon, 17, 21 ff., 71, 74 ff., 100, 385  
Narbada, River, 154, 184  
*Narrative of James Williams*, 342  
*Nazarana and nazars*, 149, 268, 286  
Nelson, Wolfried, 402  
Nepal and Nepalese, 73 ff., 151 ff.,  
    162 ff., 173, 237 ff., 290
- New Brunswick, 357  
New South Wales, 398  
Newswriters, ix, 142, 149  
Niagara District, 379 ff.; Falls, 361,  
    401  
Nicholson, John, 296  
Nicholson, Simon, 240  
Nicolls, Jasper, 162, 165, 247 ff., 251  
Nilgiris, 308 ff.  
Nizam. *See* Hyderabad  
Normanby, Lord, 361  
North-Western Provinces, 126, 240,  
    252 ff., 274, 322, 325 ff., 335  
Nova Scotia, 358
- Ochterlony, Sir David, 64 ff., 68 ff.  
    89, 91, 97 ff., 101, 117, 138 ff., 154,  
    163, 165, 168, 170 ff., 185, 241 ff.  
Ojibways, 383  
Olivier, Lord, 344, 349  
Ontario, Lake, 360, 401  
Ootacamund, 308 ff.  
Opium, 261  
Orangemen, 377 ff., 386, 402  
Oregon, 397  
Orientalists, 302  
Orissa, 306  
O'Shaughnessy, Mr., 388  
Oudh, 29, 198 ff., 202, 211, 292 ff.,  
    326
- Palmer, The, 192 ff.  
Palmer, General, 101, 192, 224  
Palmer, Hastings, 210 ff., 215  
Palmer, John, 193, 224, 229, 257 ff.,  
    304  
Palmer, John, Junior, 214  
Palmer, Robert, 214  
Palmer, William, 135, 192 ff., 214 ff.,  
    224 ff.  
Palmerston, Lord, 314  
Papineau, D. B., 399  
Paramountcy, 245 ff., 286 ff.

# INDEX

- Parliament, 110, 135, 252, 354, 356 ff.  
 Pathans, 67  
 Patiala, 73, 75, 80, 90, 94, 97  
 Patronage, 177, 197 ff., 335  
 Pattison, J., 226  
 Peel, Sir Robert, 357, 363, 392, 404  
 Penang, 106  
 Permanent Settlement, 130, 267  
 Perron, M., 22  
 Persia and Persians, 74 ff.  
 Persian language, 23, 105, 149, 303  
 Peshawar, 163  
 Peshwa, 149, 171 ff., 178, 184, 200  
 Pindaris, 154 ff., 166, 169 ff.  
 Pitt, William, 10, 12, 38  
 Plague, 327  
 Planters in Jamaica, 341 ff.; indigo  
   in India, 136  
 'Pocket Cutters', 122  
 Police, 122  
 Politicals, 71, 142, 287, 293 ff.  
 Pollock, Dr., 400 ff.  
 Pondichéry, x  
 Poona, 101, 114, 142, 149, 192, 347  
 Popham, Captain, 79  
 Poor Laws, the, 338, 356  
 Portland Place, 411  
 Pottinger, Colonel, 286  
 Frankrishna's Mission, 141 ff.  
 Presbyterians, 398  
 Press, Liberation of the, 317 ff., 328,  
   410  
 Prince Regent (George IV), 110,  
   113, 166, 226, 251  
 Princes, Indian, 117 ff., 140, 143 ff.,  
   157 ff., 166 ff., 178, 194 ff., 226,  
   282 ff., 286 ff., 290 ff., 330 ff.  
 Prinsep, Henry Thoby, 269, 291  
 Privy Council, 413  
 Punjab, 73 ff., 173, 251  
 'Quashee', 298 ff.  
 Quebec, 394 ff., 403, 406  
 Radnor, Lord, 410  
 Rajputana and Rajputs, 117, 127,  
   143 ff., 157 ff., 163, 166, 168 ff.,  
   172, 242, 252 ff., 290 ff., 324, 327  
 Raleigh, Sir Walter, vii  
 Rammohan Roy, 138, 288 ff., 303 ff.  
 Ramu, 237  
 Ranjit Singh, 73 ff., 105, 123, 144,  
   154 ff., 246, 281 ff., 304, 329 ff.  
 Rebellion in Canada, 361 ff., 368,  
   379, 381, 398 ff.  
 Reform Bill, 265, 297 ff., 337, 374  
 Reformers (Canada), 367 ff., 381  
 'Regulations', 117 ff., 318, 321  
 Responsible Government, 362 ff.,  
   372 ff., 380 ff.  
 Rewa, 292  
 Richardson, Mr. John, 162  
 Richardson, Mrs., 30, 41, 48  
 Richmond (Surrey), 332  
 Ricketts, C. M., 165, 172, 294  
 Rider, Jacob, 7, 27, 48  
 Rohilkhand, 147  
 Rohillas, 67  
 Ross, Alexander, 321  
 Rumbold, George, 214  
 Rumbold, Sir Thomas, 193  
 Rumbold, Sir William, 163, 193 ff.,  
   207 ff., 239, 262  
 Rupar, 285  
 Ruskin, John, 337  
 Russell Brigade, the, 192  
 Russell, Charles, 190, 194  
 Russell, Henry, 186 ff., 194 ff., 202,  
   204, 206, 215  
 Russell, Sir Henry, 141 ff.  
 Russell, Lord John, 340, 350 ff., 364  
 Russia, 74, 283, 285  
 Ryerson, Rev. Egerton, 402  
 Saadi, 24, 303  
 Sadr Amins, 301  
 Sagar, 152 ff.

# INDEX

- Saharanpur, 69  
 St. Clair Indians, 382  
 St. Helena, 19  
 St. Lawrence, River, 359 ff., 361, 375  
 St. Vincent, Lord, 299, 341  
 Salmon, 398  
 Sanskrit, 302  
 Satara, ix  
 Satlej, River, 74 ff., 92, 95 ff., 285  
 Secret Ballot, 337 ff.  
 Secret Committee, 100, 283, 291  
 Sedley, Jos., 50  
 Seringapatam, 17, 21, 105  
 Seton, Archibald, 65 ff., 75 ff., 87 ff.,  
     95, 106, 111 ff., 114, 117, 130,  
     139 ff., 145 ff., 156  
 Shah Alam, King of Delhi, 68 ff.,  
     137 ff.  
 Shah Suja, 155  
 Shakespeare, William, 1, 115, 375  
 Shalimar Gardens (Delhi), 149 ff.,  
     243, 245; (Lahore), 99  
 Shaw, Major, 57  
 Sherer, J. W., 30, 35, 41, 52 ff., 57,  
     60 ff., 69, 71, 163, 177, 194, 198,  
     332  
 Shoes, wearing of, 296  
 Shore, Sir John (Lord Teignmouth),  
     22, 68, 101  
 Sikhs, 73 ff., 98, 101, 260, 282, 326  
 Sind, 79, 147, 251, 282 ff.  
 Sindhia, Daulat Rao, 22, 28, 46, 53,  
     99 ff., 105 ff., 114, 138 ff., 143,  
     152, 154, 156 ff., 167, 169, 172,  
     290  
 Slaves and Slavery, 127 ff., 143,  
     298 ff., 340 ff., 361 ff., 397  
 Sligo, Marquis of, 342  
 Smith, the Rev. John, 347  
 Smith, Sir Lionel, 343, 347, 365  
 Smith, Major R., 5 ff.  
 Smith, Mr. (Attorney-General,  
     Lower Canada), 399  
 Smith, General Richard, 5 ff.  
 Smyth, Dame Ethel, 417  
 Smyth, Rev. Thomas, 232 ff.  
 Smyth, William, 305  
 Sohan Lal, 101  
 Sotheby, 194, 201, 203, 215, 218  
 Speidall, Mrs., 2 ff.  
 Spies, ix, 142, 149  
 Spittoons, 296  
 Spoils System, 368  
 Stanley, Lord, 357 ff., 368 ff., 371 ff.,  
     376 ff., 380 ff., 387, 389, 392, 395,  
     402, 405 ff.  
 Stephen, Sir James, 406  
 Stewart, John, 322  
 Stipendiary Magistrates, 347, 349  
 Strachey, Richard, 154  
 Stuart, James, 177, 192, 196 ff., 199,  
     201, 221  
 Sumroo Begum, 139 ff., 255  
 Sutherland, Colonel, 190 ff., 204,  
     241, 247 ff., 255  
 Suttee (widow-burning), 127, 274 ff.  
 Sweepers, 122  
 Swinton, George, 177, 205 ff., 218,  
     229  
 Sydenham, Captain, 189 ff.  
 Sydenham, Lord, 363 ff., 369 ff.,  
     385 ff.  
 Tait, Mr., 9, 18  
 Taj Mahal, 30  
 Talbot (Canada), 380  
 Tara Bai, 166, 171  
 Taylor, Meadows, 374  
 Tea-drinking, 13 ff.  
 Teheran, 76  
 Teignmouth, Lord. *See* Shore, Sir  
     John Teignmouth  
 Thackeray, W. M., 366  
 Thompson, David, 397 ff.  
 Thornton, General, 227  
 Tilsit, Treaty of, 74

# INDEX

- Tipu Sultan, 5, 21, 31  
 Tolstoi, 38  
 Tonk, 170  
 Tories, 10, 12, 313, 316, 322, 356, 366, 372, 377 ff., 388  
 Toronto, 395, 397  
 Trant, W. H., 228  
 Trevelyan, Sir C. E., 287, 292  
 Trevelyan, Professor G. M., 287  
 Tucker, H. St. G., 164, 308, 314, 316, 323, 328  
 Tyrell, J. B., 398  
  
 Ujjain, 28, 32  
 Umbala (Ambala), 97 ff.  
 United States of America, 127, 358 ff., 361 ff., 368, 376 ff., 384, 395 ff. *See* Americans  
 Upper Provinces. *See* North-Western Provinces  
 Utica, 359  
  
 Van Buren, Martin, 358, 361  
 Vellore Mutiny, 261  
*Vendus*, 369 ff.  
 Victoria, Queen, 87, 332 (Coronation of), 341, 357 ff., 381, 404  
 Viger, Mr., 394, 399, 402  
  
 Wakefield, Gibbon, 367, 373, 385, 392, 407  
 Wales, 179  
 Wardha, River, 193, 204  
 Waring, Scott, 259  
 Watson, Admiral, 61  
 Wauchope, John, 153  
 Webbe, W., 259  
 Wellesley, Lord, 18, 21 ff., 42 ff., 49, 56 ff., 59, 68, 104, 125, 137 ff., 176, 259, 266, 300, 311, 315, 317, 329, 332, 340 ff., 411  
 Wellington, Duke of, 23, 44, 171, 259, 283, 297 ff., 332, 343, 372  
 Wells, Mr., 240  
 Wesleyan Methodists, 347, 349, 352, 382 ff., 402  
 West Indies, 127, 299  
 Whigs, 313, 316, 322  
 Widow-burning. *See* Suttee  
 Wight, Isle of, 304  
 Wilder, Mr., 175  
 Winch, Aunt, 9, 18  
 Windsor, 357  
*Windsor Forest*, 10  
 Wooster, Mr. Bertram, 338  
 Zemindars, 130 ff., 268 ff., 305





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